

PRABUDDHA BHARATA *or* **AWAKENED INDIA**

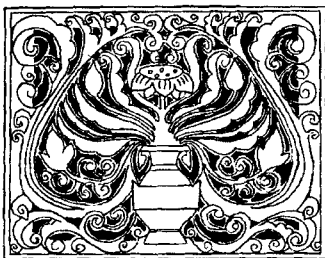


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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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Cover: Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother's temple at Jayrambati seen today and a period photograph in the foreground. Mother was born in this sanctified village for the good of all Her children in 1853.

उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत ।

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!

Vol. 109

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No. 5

Traditional Wisdom

DETACHMENT

वीतरागभयक्रोधा मन्मया मामुपाश्रिताः ।
बहवो ज्ञानतपसा पूता मद्भावमागताः ॥

Freed from attachment, fear and anger, absorbed in Me, taking refuge in Me, and purified by the fire of Knowledge, many have become one with My Being. (*Bhagavadgita*, 4.10)

The human frame is made up of decaying matter. It is a collection of flesh, bone, marrow, blood and other unclean substances subject to putrefaction. By such constant analysis of the body one's love for it vanishes. (*Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, 132)

If I want to adopt the non-dualistic attitude, I will have to deny the body, mind and intellect. As soon as I say, 'I am the Atman', my feelings of happiness and misery must go, and I shall experience myself as 'partless, actionless, tranquil, blameless, unattached'. On the other hand, if I say, 'I am the child of God, His servant', then I will have to resign myself completely to Him with the conviction that whatever He does for me and wherever He keeps me is absolutely for my good. Both paths are equally difficult, and both demand spiritual disciplines. But the results of both are the same: the cessation of ignorance and the attainment of supreme Bliss. ... Let one follow the path that is suitable for one, but one must practise wholeheartedly. Otherwise, neither path will yield any result. (Swami Turiyananda)

Love everyone as you would your closest relatives, knowing them all to be the children of Sri Ramakrishna. Pay no heed if one praises you or another blames you. If you have anything to offer, give, but expect no return. All are good, very good. I do not see anyone who is not good. You have been born for the purpose of setting examples of ideal lives in the lila of Sri Ramakrishna. Always remember this. (Swami Premananda)

☪ This Month ☪

How desires influence our personality, the cause, seat and root of desire—these are discussed in **An Anatomy of Desires**, this month's editorial.

Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago features 'Brahman and Ishvara', an illuminating article by 'Sruti'.

Reflections on the Bhagavadgita is Swami Atulanandaji's commentary on verses 19 to 24 of the ninth chapter of the *Gita*.

In the concluding part of his travelogue **A Visit to Europe**, Swami Smarananandaji describes his visit to England. The author is General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission.

Sri Ramakrishna's Impact on Contemporary Indian Society by Dr Jayasree Mukherjee is a well-researched article on Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual humanism; his influence on Keshab Chandra Sen and other Brahmos and the Brahmos' role in spreading the Master's message; his influence on the elite of Calcutta; and the influence that triggered Swami Vivekananda's arrival at his guru's feet. Making a realistic appraisal of Sri Ramakrishna, the author rightly concludes that the Master 'rescued religion from the trammels of tenet and dogma, rite and liturgy'. A long-standing devotee of the Master, the author is Reader in History, Presidency College, Kolkata.

In the first part of his well-researched article **Sanskrit Studies and Comparative Philology in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-century Europe**, Swami Tathagatanandaji details the contributions of European scholars like Anquetil-Duperron, Sir William Jones

and Charles Wilkins in popularizing Sanskrit, the *Bhagavadgita* and the Upanishads. The author is a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order. His latest work, *Journey of the Upanishads to the West*, is published by the Vedanta Society of New York, of which he is the head.

Greed is the twin brother of lust—a formidable duo Sri Ramakrishna warns spiritual aspirants to be careful about. In **Greed** Sri N Hariharan discusses the root, cause, and remedy of greed, and argues that refuge in the Spirit alone can help us get rid of the evil. A postgraduate in economics, the author is actively associated with Ramakrishna Math, Madurai.

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras—An Exposition is a commentary by Swami Premeshanandaji on sutras 48 to 56 of the third chapter, 'Vibhūti Pāda'. A detailed introduction on *kai-valya*, freedom, begins the fourth chapter, 'Kaivalya Pāda'. Sri Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee, translator of the original Bengali notes, is a former Professor of Statistics from Calcutta University.

Kuṇḍika Upaniṣad is the seventh instalment of a translation of this important Sannyasa Upanishad by Swami Atmapriyanandaji, Principal, Ramakrishna Mission Vidya-mandira, Belur. The notes are based on Upanishad Brahmayogin's commentary.

The sixty-three Tamil Shaiva saints called Nayanmars were exemplars of a God-centred life. They willingly paid the price such a life demanded. In this month's **Glimpses of Holy Lives** we feature some incredible incidents from the life of Siruttonda Nayanar. *

An Anatomy of Desires

EDITORIAL

Vedanta says that we are not this body and mind, but are essentially divine. This divinity is at the root of our very existence and is the source of infinite Knowledge and Bliss. Man is not conscious of his divinity because of ignorance (*avidyā*). It is this ignorance which prompts him to desire (*kāma*) enjoyment and seek lasting happiness in the world. And desires are not merely those directed towards gross objects; there are desires for wealth, prosperity, progeny and, to cap it all, name and fame. Vedanta has a term for these desires: *eṣaṇā*. Desires, in turn, goad man to action (karma) towards their fulfilment. Sri Shankara often refers to this triangle of *avidyā*, *kāma* and karma in his commentaries on the Upanishads and the *Bhagavadgīta*.

Our search for happiness in the external world is through the five perceptions: hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell. And the instruments for these perceptions are our five sense organs: ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose. The sense organs are so constituted that they are ever outward directed and tend to come in touch with their respective sense objects.

Unmixed or Lasting Happiness Impossible in the World

Life in the world is beset with dualities: pleasure-pain, praise-blame, heat-cold and so on. Unmixed pleasure is thus impossible in the world. It is a package deal: you have the one and the other comes in uninvited. Says Swami Vivekananda, 'Happiness presents itself before man, wearing the crown of sorrow on its head. He who welcomes it must also welcome sorrow.'¹

That desire is the cause of all misery, Buddha discovered long back and declared it as one of the Four Noble Truths. A life of un-

bridled sense enjoyment has to necessarily end up in misery and frustration. The Upanishads also make it clear that lasting happiness is possible only by realizing the Infinite (Spirit); there can be no happiness in the finite things of the world.²

We shall discuss here the effects, cause, seat and root of desire.

Man Acts Despite Himself

In the *Gīta*, Arjuna asks Sri Krishna an important question: 'Under what compulsion does man commit sin, in spite of himself and dragged, as it were, by force?' Replies the Lord, 'It is desire, it is anger; both spring from rajas. These are our enemies, all-devouring and the cause of all sin.'³ A poignant verse from the *Mahabharata* describes how Duryodhana was helpless when he was overpowered by desire for his cousins' land and kingdom: 'I know what is dharma, but I cannot practise it; I know what is adharma, but I cannot refrain from it.' Desire and anger are twin brothers. And in the words of the *Gīta*, when coupled with greed these twin brothers pave the way to hell.⁴

Enjoyment Cannot Quench Desires

Most people think that they will see through worldly enjoyments, and that Vedanta could wait for their retired life, if at all. Unfortunately, things do not work out that way. A mind given to sense enjoyment and brooding over worldly concerns cannot just turn to higher things concomitant with retirement. Nor does fulfilment of our desires help us get rid of them; they only increase all the more.

King Yayati's life from the *Bhagavata* illustrates the point. In his brim of youth Yayati was cursed to premature old age by an in-

censed sage. The king asked the sage's pardon and prayed for a remedy. The sage told him that he could have his youth back if someone else exchanged his youth for the king's old age. The king exchanged his son's youth for his old age and enjoyed sense pleasures for thousands of years. If desires could be quenched by satisfying them, Yayati would have been a sated man by now. Instead, he discovered a profound truth: 'Desire can never be quenched by enjoying sense objects. Like fire fed with ghee, it only flames up all the more.'⁵

Desire Leads to Gradual Ruin

In sense life too, there is no such thing as free lunch. If man gets sense pleasure on the one hand, the pleasure also simultaneously forges one more link in the chain that binds him to the cycle of birth and death, and blinds him to his real, divine nature. The *Gita* vividly describes the systematic descent triggered by brooding over sense objects:

When a man broods over sense objects he develops attachment towards them. Attachment gives rise to the desire to possess them. Desire results in anger (towards the obstacles to sense enjoyment). From anger is born delusion, and delusion results in loss of memory (of what one has learnt from the scriptures and from one's guru). With loss of memory one's buddhi, discrimination, is lost. And loss of discrimination is followed by spiritual death.⁶

How Desire Originates

When desires can spell man's ruin, they merit a deeper study with a view to doing something about them. How do our desires sprout? From the subtle impressions in the mind, called samskaras. Our every act and thought leaves a subtle impression in our mind called samskara. There are good and bad samskaras corresponding to good and bad actions and thoughts. And it is these samskaras, collected over innumerable births, that determine what we are every moment. And in Swami Vivekananda's words, their sum total determines our character.

Each action produces an inevitable *karmaphala*, or fruit of action. This result of action is bound to visit the doer with unerring certainty. Besides this, the action also leaves its mark on the individual's mind. This mark or impression is called samskara, which is of two types: (a) *karmāśaya*, the tendency or desire to repeat an action and (b) *vāsanā*, the memory of the action.

Every repetition of an action or thought deepens the samskara, deepening with it the tendency to repeat the action or thought. When the samskara become sufficiently deep, the action or thought become a habit and makes us good or bad in spite of ourselves. The deeper the samskara, the greater the effort required to change a habit or thought pattern. The effort involved in turning a new leaf is so formidable that many give up the struggle midway. People exclaim, 'Who says you can't give up smoking? I gave given it up many times!'

Vāsanā is memory of an action or a perception. This memory also stores in it the knowledge of how we perceived a thing. If we eat a rasagolla for the first time, the knowledge about the sweetness of the sweet—that is, how it differs from the sweetness of any other sweet—is stored in the samskara.

By itself, the memory of an action is harmless. It doesn't bind our soul. We get bound only when our will, the dynamic aspect of buddhi, hooks itself to the tendency or desire produced by *karmāśaya*.

The Seat of Desire

Vedanta says divinity is the core of our personality. When this real 'I', the Atman, identifies itself with the mind and the body, we feel we are individuals with distinct identities. In order that any perception becomes possible, the 'I' should get connected to buddhi; the buddhi should get linked with *manas*, the deliberative faculty; the *manas* should come in contact with the sense organ; and the sense organ should get linked with the sense object.

Both memory and the desire to repeat an action inhere in our mental storehouse, called *chitta*. Though memory and desire are two separate things, they get easily connected in a person who is not wide awake. In most of us, our 'I' is identified with the mind and the body; the buddhi is not always awake or alert. When our 'I' gets connected to the combined memory and desire, it is really our will (buddhi) that gets linked to them. When the will (energized by the Atman behind it) gets linked to the desire, harmless images from memory become animated with life, hooking with them the *manas*, the sense organ and the sense object, making us succumb to the desire. The chain of this enjoyment need not always terminate at the gross level; it could stop at the subtle sense organ and subtle sense object, resulting in enjoyment at the mental level itself.

Desire thus extends from our buddhi through *manas* to the sense organs, making us blind to our real nature. Says Sri Krishna in the Gita, 'The sense organs, the mind and the intellect (buddhi) are the seat of desire. Through these it deludes the embodied soul by veiling its wisdom.'⁷

The Root of Desire

The significant point in the above discussion is this: it is the will (the dynamic aspect of buddhi) that starts the downward journey by attaching itself to the desire. This wilful attachment of the will to the desire is what is called *sankalpa*, resolution. Parenthetically, it may be said that the *sankalpa* done before a puja has a positive connotation: it is done to consciously connect the wayward will to the act of puja. The famous verse from the *Mahabharata* underlines the importance of *sankalpa* in triggering man's downfall: 'O desire, I know your root. You spring from will (*sankalpa*). I shall not tag my will to you. You will then be destroyed with your roots.'⁸

The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* describes

the connection between desire, will and karma: 'The Self is identified with desire alone. What it desires, it resolves; as is its resolution, so is its action. And whatever it carries out into action, that it reaps.'⁹ Sri Shankara comments on this passage: 'Desire manifests itself as longing for a particular object, and, if unchecked, it assumes a more definite shape and becomes resolve.'

During the initial stages of his struggle with his mind, a spiritual aspirant may not always succeed in detaching his will from desire. As long as it is not a wilful action on his part, he need not be unduly worry about his will getting hooked to the subtle sense organ and the subtle sense object. He only needs to strive with greater effort for purity of mind. That is perhaps what Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi meant by saying 'In this Kali yuga mental sin is no sin.' The aspirant's sincere struggle with his mind fortified with prayer and japa will enable him to gradually gain upper hand over his unruly mind.

* * *

We have discussed how desires influence our personality, their origin, seat and root. Does Vedanta advocate desirelessness for everyone? What are the possible means to rid ourselves of desires? These will form the subject of the next editorial. *

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1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 5.419.
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3. *Bhagavadgita*, 3.36.
4. *Ibid.*, 16.21.
5. *Bhagavata*, 9.19.14.
6. *Gita*, 2.62-3.
7. *Ibid.*, 3.40.
8. 'Shantiparva', *Mahabharata*, 177.25.
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May 1904

Brahman and Ishvara

Every object is the form of a substance. The table is a form of the substance, wood. The universe consists of objects material, mental and spiritual. We see material objects through five senses. The mental objects are the thoughts and the spiritual, the souls. Though we do not see them at present, we shall do so when our other faculties of perception will open. It is said that there is one substance of which all the objects of the universe are forms, as tables are of wood. That one substance is the Brahman of the Advaita Vedanta.

Our perception of an object consists in the perception of another object as its substance with a form. Perception of an object, table, consists in the perception of another object, wood, as its substance with the table form. Sometimes the perception of the form may be more definite than that of the substance; at other times, the perception of the substance may be more definite than that of the form. Again, both the perceptions may be equally definite at the same time. And there are degrees of definiteness of the perceptions. This is a psychological fact which will be evident on a little thought. This difference in the definiteness of the perceptions of the form and the substance, observed when one object is looked upon as the form of another, may reasonably be supposed to occur when that object is looked upon as the form of Brahman, the one ultimate substance of all objects. Ordinarily the perception of the form is far more definite than that of the ultimate substance, of which the perception is so indefinite that we can hardly formulate it to ourselves. Religious realization of the Advaita Vedanta means an intense definiteness of the latter perception, with or without an equally intense definiteness of the former.

What is the difference between an object, table, and its substance, wood? Certainly, only the table-form. Now, we can never think of the table-form as an independent something separate from the wood. Form has therefore no real existence. Nor is it non-existence, seeing that it exists, as objects are perceived with it. Form is, as it were, a shadow round everything and we cannot catch it; we can neither affirm nor deny its existence. It is a mixture of non-existence and existence. The difference between table and wood, consisting as it does only in the table-form, necessarily partakes of the peculiar nature of the form and therefore can neither be said to exist nor not to exist. In other words, table is the same, yet not the same as wood. Likewise, considering Brahman as the ultimate substance of every object, it is the same, yet not the same as Brahman. The well-known Advaita texts, '*Tattvamasi*, That thou art', '*Sarvam khalvidam brahma*, All this verily is Brahman', signify that souls, thoughts and material objects, are all one with Brahman in the same sense as table is wood.

Deprive the objects of all their form-making attributes, and the residuum, of course formless, will be their ultimate substance. Objects exist; Brahman cannot be said to exist, for that would make it an object. But being the substance of all existing objects, it can be said to be existence itself. Souls are intelligent; Brahman cannot be said to be intelligent, for that would make it a soul. But, being the substance of all intelligent souls, it can be said to be intelligence itself. It is not powerful, but power itself; not blissful, but bliss itself; not loving, but love itself.

The question why the formless takes the forms cannot be answered. The answer that they are due to maya only drives the question a point further—why does the formless become associated with the form-making maya? An Advaitist had better admit his inability, rather than attempt, to explain the inexplicable.

Concepts imply correlatives. The conception of a part is impossible without that of a whole.

There can be no conception of equality without one of inequality, of finiteness without one of infiniteness. In the same manner, man being a being possessed of limited knowledge and power, his conception of himself as such is possible only by opposition to that of a being possessed of unlimited knowledge and power. As he can, on no account, eradicate the conception of his self as a limited being, he can, on no account, eradicate the correlative conception of an unlimited being. The latter conception may be more or less indefinite, but, at all times, remains with him as a positive element of thought. It need hardly be pointed out that every conception is caused by, and is impossible without, a corresponding thing in the real world. True, we can have the conception of an unreal being, a centaur, but that conception is formed only by combining the conceptions caused by real things, man and horse. We know definitely only limited things. Certainly no manner of manipulation of the conceptions caused by limited things can give rise to the conception of an unlimited being. We are therefore forced to admit the existence of a being possessed of unlimited knowledge and power, causing and making possible this conception. Only, our consciousness of him is generally indefinite. Two individuals can differ only by limiting each other some way; otherwise they are one. Therefore there can be only one unlimited being, for more than one being would limit one another and therefore none of them could be unlimited. He is the Personal God, the universal Soul, the Ishvara of Advaitism.

Besides, we observe gradations of manifestation of knowledge and power in the beings inhabiting our planet. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, none can tell that the innumerable celestial bodies, visible and invisible, are not inhabited by beings manifesting far greater knowledge and power than ours and that the manifestation does not go on becoming greater and greater till it reaches unlimitedness in an unlimited being. Add to this the evidence of the sages of all countries and ages, men ideally pure, unselfish and truthful, actuated with the sole motive to do good to the world, who declare to have perceived Him, why, even to have had relations with Him as their father, mother, master, friend and what not; nay, even in a far more intense sense than we perceive and have relations with our earthly relatives. We cannot at all understand how one can deny the existence of Ishvara.

Ishvara is the highest form of Brahman. An infinite variety of articles can be made out of wood. As wood they are all one; but as formed articles and so long as the forms remain, they are different. A wood-pencil is not the same as a wood-table, though, substantially, they are identical as wood. Ishvara, individual souls and nature, comprising matter and mind, are all forms of the substance, Brahman, and therefore, as substance, they are all identical; but as forms they are certainly different and neither an individual soul nor nature is ever the same as Ishvara.

Every unit is composed of other units, yet it is a unit separate from them. A book consists of many units, the leaves, yet it is a unit, the book, that is not the same as the leaves. Every living organism, man, animal or bird, consists, physiology tells us, of innumerable cells. The cells are themselves each an individual. A living organism therefore is composed of many individuals, the cells, yet it is an individual, a man, an animal or a bird as the case may be, evidently separate from them. In the same manner, Ishvara, being the highest individual, is composed of all the individuals of the universe, yet He is an individual separate from them. His body is the universe taken as a whole.

Ishvara is the absolute master of limitations. He is not under the conditions of existence, time, place and causation; these are under Him. No hard and fast rules can be laid down as conditions for gaining His grace. He is beyond rules. Prayers may move Him or not. The most earnest soul may struggle his whole life to see Him, yet see nothing; He may reveal Himself to one who never cared to think of Him. Such an Ishvara may seem to man a veritable madman; but, admitting the unconditional freedom of His nature, he cannot certainly bring Him within the domain of rules and conditions. Devotion to such an Ishvara is possible only in the most unselfish heart. He alone who expects nothing can love Him from whom nothing can be expected with certainty.

—*Sruti*

Reflections on the *Bhagavadgita*

SWAMI ATULANANDA

Chapter 9 (continued)

19. I give heat; I withhold the rain and send it forth. I am immortality as well as death; I am being and non-being, O Arjuna.

Through My mysterious power I give heat through the sun. I also cause rain, and again through evaporation I gather up the moisture. I am immortality and death—both come from Me. I am being and non-being; that means the manifest world and the unmanifest, the effect and the cause. Non-being does not mean non-existence, which is absurd. The *Chandogya Upanishad* says, ‘How can Existence come out of non-existence?’¹ That cannot be.

Now all the faithful devotees whom Sri Krishna had spoken of in verses 13 to 18, who worship God with wisdom-sacrifice in various ways, as one or as distinct from themselves—they will all go to the Lord. They will all get mukti and they will realize Him, as Brahman or as Ishvara according to their understanding. But as regards those who are ignorant and who long for objects of desire, Sri Krishna says in the next verse:

20. The Knowers of the three Vedas, having worshipped Me by sacrifice, drinking the soma and thus being purified from sin, pray for the goal of heaven; having reached the region of the ruler of the devas, they enjoy in heaven the celestial pleasures of the devas.

Those who have studied the Vedas and who perform the rites and ceremonies enjoined by them and who drink the *soma*—they are purified from their sins. *Soma* is the juice of a plant now extinct. This juice was slightly intoxicating and was taken during or after the sacrifice. And as they performed their sacrifices (and that of course holds good for all religions or moral practices) in the hope of gaining heaven, their prayer is fulfilled, and after death they go to Indra’s heaven, the high-

est of the celestial spheres, where they enjoy celestial pleasures. In heaven they find their hopes and wishes fulfilled, and for long ages they live there in great contentment. But then after they have received their reward they must again come to earth, for they have not yet realized the highest Truth. They have not finished their schooling yet. They only enjoyed a long and pleasant vacation. What does Sri Krishna say?

21. Having enjoyed the vast celestial sphere, at the exhaustion of the merit (of their good deeds) they again enter into the mortal world; thus abiding by the injunctions of the three (Vedas), with the craving for objects of desire, they (constantly) come and go.

These devotees follow the *karma-kanda* of the Vedas, the ritualistic part. They do not understand the *jnana-kanda*, the part of the Vedas that deals with mukti, or freedom. They think that mukti, or nirvana, must

mean annihilation and that they do not desire. They wish to enjoy the good things of this earth and the still better things of heaven. And they are willing to abide by the injunctions of the scriptures to get their desires fulfilled. It is

their desires that stand in their way to freedom. They do not believe in the efficacy of renunciation. But 'Everything in this life is fraught with fear. It is renunciation alone that makes one fearless.'² And again the Upanishad declares, 'Not by wealth, not by progeny, but by renunciation the goal is reached.'³ True renunciation means filling our life with God. Worldly things will then retreat as a result of that steady devotion to Him. We cannot renounce until we have something to renounce for. Renunciation really means an exchange of the worldly life for spiritual life, taking God and giving up the world, or, better still, replacing the material vision of life with the spiritual vision. It is very difficult to be unattached, to love God more than the world. Still if only we knew how the Lord cares for His devotees—they are very dear to Him; He looks after them with tender care.

There are many stories that illustrate that love of God for His devotees, whom He considers His own. These stories we find in the Puranas and other scriptures. One of the most beautiful of the stories is the story of a little boy to whom God appeared in human form, because he had a very devoted mother.

There was a little boy and his mother was a great devotee. She always worshipped Krishna. But she was very poor. She lived with her little son, far from the village, and she could barely manage to make both ends meet. When the boy was old enough his mother sent him to school. Every morning the little fellow would pick up his slate and his mat to sit on, as is Eastern fashion, and would set out for school. But the distance was considerable and the path led through a thick forest. The boy did not like to go through the forest all alone. He was frightened. He often heard strange noises and in some places the forest was dark with heavy foliage. And so he told his mother of his fear.

Now the mother could not possibly go with him, and she did not want the boy to lose his schooling. So she told him, 'When you en-

ter the forest call for Brother Krishna. Then you will not be afraid.' When the boy went to school the next day, he became frightened again seeing some animal move in the brush. He remembered what his mother had told him and he called out, 'Brother Krishna, Brother Krishna, come quick, there is an animal and I do not know what it is.' And there, from behind a tree stepped out Brother Krishna, a beautiful boy, strong and healthy and a head taller than the frightened boy. Seeing Brother Krishna our little friend was very happy and felt quite sure that his big brother would be able to kill all the animals in the forest, so big and strong he looked.

The boys walked through the forest together, talking and playing as they went along. But at the end of the forest brother Krishna said, 'Now I must go back, but I will come whenever you call Me.' Those were happy days for the little boy. Every day going to school and returning through the forest he would call, 'Brother Krishna, come and play with me.' And Brother Krishna would come and they would be happy together.

Now it happened that the teacher's birthday was approaching and all the boys were going to be treated and they were going to have a most glorious time; for the guru was a good and kind teacher and he loved to see his pupils happy. All the boys were going to bring a present that day for the teacher, some nice fruit, or a new turban, or a dhoti, each according to his means. And so, on coming home, our little fellow told his mother all about it and then asked her what present he was going to take to the teacher. The mother did not know what to answer. What could she give, poor woman that she was, with scarcely food enough to keep her boy and herself alive? She thought and thought, but there was nothing worth giving. At last she said, 'Well, my son, we are very poor. You must tell the teacher that you feel very sorry but that you are a very poor boy and that your mother could not give you anything to present to the teacher.'

The little fellow was very sorry for he loved his teacher, and also because he thought what will the other boys say when I go empty-handed? The next day when he went to school, instead of being very happy like the other boys at the prospect of a great feast and holiday, the boy was thoroughly miserable and ashamed. And when he called Brother Krishna there were tears in his eyes.

Now Brother Krishna knew what was troubling the lad, so he had made provision for the occasion and when he appeared that morning he brought with him a small pitcher of milk. 'Well, little brother,' He said, 'why are you weeping? I brought you a little present for your teacher. And you will see that he will be very happy to have it.' Now the boy was satisfied. It was not much to give, but it was far better than nothing. He was smiling and happy when he reached the school and offered his little present.

The teacher knew that the boy was very poor, so he appreciated the little gift and thanked the boy very kindly. He took the pitcher and emptied the milk. But what was his surprise when the milk kept on running!

One basin after another was filled, but still the milk ran from the little pitcher until every pot and can that could be found was filled with milk. That was a great surprise. Delicious dishes and sweetmeats (such as are known in India only) were prepared from the milk and there was great rejoicing.

Then the teacher asked the boy where he got the milk. And the boy told him that Brother Krishna had given it to him that morning.

Imagine the joy of the mother when her little son related to her what had happened. Krishna, the Lord, had done all this.

And these are not just stories. Many devotees can testify to the fact that God really and visibly takes care of them. With our materialistic education and training such things seem utterly impossible and incredible. Our belief and faith is so weak that we cannot believe and accept as true anything that goes even slightly different from our day-to-day experience. But bhaktas feel quite satisfied that the Lord is all-powerful and that He hears the prayers of His devotees. Nay, even without their prayer the Lord cares and provides for them. What does Sri Krishna say in the next verse?

22. Those who, meditating on Me as non-separate, worship Me in all beings, to these ever-steadfast devotees I secure safety and supply all their needs.

Sri Krishna speaks now of the highest bhaktas who worship God in all beings, who know Him as non-separate from themselves. These are the devotees who in deep meditation, in samadhi, have realized His presence and who have identified themselves with Him. Their hearts and minds are always filled with God. They actually feel their union with Him. Constantly they live in the presence of Him who is their real Self. These are the sannyasins, those who have renounced all that they might possess for God. They have realized that 'The Lord is the wealth of those who have nothing, of those who have thrown away all desires of possession, even that of their own soul.' They see Him alone, recognizing Him everywhere; for them there is no separation anywhere, all is

Divinity, God's manifestation. Life and Death are same to them. The Lord alone exists. There is naught else besides Him.

These are the devotees of whom Sri Krishna said in the seventh chapter, 'They form My very Self and are very dear to Me.'⁴ 'And because they take refuge in Me alone, I watch over them and protect them. I secure their safety and give them what they need. They do not look after themselves; they only look up to Me. They forget about their own comfort through love for Me; therefore I watch over them. I, as it were, carry them.'

Once there was a poor man, who made his bare living by gathering wood in the forest and selling it in the market. All that he possessed was an axe and a rope, to cut and carry the wood. Now it happened that a great reli-

gious gathering took place in the village. Pilgrims came in thousands from all parts of the country. Song and worship was to be carried on all day.

The poor man was very pious. He yearned to join in the festivities and to add his little mite to the offerings made to the village god that day. But what could he do? He had no money. He thought of selling his axe and rope. But that would mean that he would be deprived of his means of livelihood. No way seemed open. But as the noise of the merry crowd reached his ears, his fervour to join in the worship got the better of him and he sold his axe and rope. And for the money he bought flowers and coconut and other articles for worship. He was very happy and joining the crowd he began to worship his beloved God with all sincerity of heart.

Then he went to the bank of the river, which he found crowded with people. The midday sun was beating down on the heads of the crowd and the heat was almost unbearable. But the poor woodcutter did not mind this in the least. He sat down near the edge of the water praying and meditating. There he sat, immovable like a statue, forgetting the heat and the people and himself in the ardour of his devotion.

But what did the people observe? Though none could find the slightest shade to protect them from the sun's burning rays, this man was sitting in the shadow. But in the shadow of what? The sky was clear. The rainy season was long past. How would he find a shady place, and that right near the holy river? They looked up at the sky. And what was their surprise when in the azure sky appeared one tiny cloud, just enough to throw a shadow over the poor woodcutter who was absorbed in prayer! There he sat, protected by his Lord from the intense heat of the sun. The people then realized that this man must be a great devotee. They paid him all honour and laid some money and food at his feet. And at evening the woodcutter went his way, rejoicing

and praising God.

But then, is the Lord partial to some of His devotees? Does He not watch over all of them? Yes, He protects all, no doubt. But very few have their entire trust in Him. Others look up to God, but at the same time they look after their own interest. They have not abandoned themselves entirely. But these highest bhaktas make no effort for themselves. They live in self-surrender. They are dead to the world; they have renounced all. Why then should they turn their thoughts away from God and back to the world again? They will never do that. They are like the kitten, says Sri Ramakrishna. The little kitten is carried about by its mother. And it is quite contented to be carried thus. It knows that when its mother carries it, no harm can come. But the little monkey holds on to its mother with its hands and feet. It feels safe with its mother, but it cannot trust her entirely. It believes in its own effort as well. So it is with ordinary devotees. The Lord is ready to carry all, to look after every devotee. But very few have that entire faith in Him.

Once Shiva, the great God, was playing a game of chess or something like that with his consort Parvati. In the middle of the game Shiva stopped and seemed to become very thoughtful. But after a few moments He resumed the game as if nothing had happened. Then Parvati became curious and she asked Him why He became so thoughtful all of a sudden. Shiva said: 'A devotee of mine was travelling through a forest. Robbers came and attacked him, so I was about to go to his rescue, when the man drew his sword and drove off the robbers. As he drew his sword in self-defence, there was no need of my going to his rescue and therefore I continued with the game. Had he depended on Me, I would have protected him from harm.'

God is ready to take our entire burden, but we have no faith. We forget to 'Consider the lillies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not

arrayed like one of these.’⁵ And Jesus told his disciples not to take thought for the morrow. ‘But,’ he said, ‘seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all things shall be added unto you.’ That is the message of the saviours of mankind.

Once Sri Ramakrishna was suffering from throat trouble and he suffered much. Seeing his suffering, one of the pundits said, ‘Sir, you have great power. If you direct your mind towards the seat of the disease, the disease will surely leave you.’ Sri Ramakrishna thought for some time and then he replied.

‘Sir, I thought you were a spiritual man, but now I see that I was mistaken: otherwise how could you ask me to put my mind on the diseased spot? My mind is entirely given to the Divine Mother. How can I then take it away from Her and put it on this material body, which is but a cage in which the soul dwells?’

What is required after all is faith and sincerity. Then all will come right. This is explained in the next verse:

23. O son of Kunti, even those devotees who worship other gods with faith, they too worship Me, but by the wrong method.

Any worship offered in good faith, no matter to which deity the worship is directed, goes to the Lord. Yet the ignorance in which the worship is offered prevents

devotees from attaining the highest results, which is liberation. The nature of their ignorance is now shown.

24. For I alone am the Enjoyer and Lord of all sacrifices; but they know Me not in Truth and hence they fall (into rebirth).

Their ignorance consists in not realizing that in reality the Lord is the God to whom sacrifice is offered. It is in the form of the *devata* that the Lord is the Enjoyer of the sacrifice. And He is the inner Regulator of the universe, the Consciousness in the gods and also in the performer of the sacrifice. ‘They do not take refuge in Me; they are satisfied with what inferior gods can give them and they know not that even these inferior deities would be powerless if it were not for Me.’ That is why these devotees do not reach the highest but come back to earth.

By worshipping other gods they attain, no doubt, to the sphere of their sacrifice, but after the exhaustion of the results, they come back from there to the mortal world. That is all

that they wish for and therefore that is all that they attain. The worship of inferior gods is not entirely useless, but it does not bring freedom. And again there are different grades even in this lower form of worship and so also in the results according to the degree of purity and understanding of the worshipper. Sri Krishna explains this in the next verse.

(To be continued)

References

1. *Chandogya Upanishad*, 6.2.2.
2. *Vairagya Shataka*, 31.
3. *Mahānārāyaṇa Upanishad*, 12.14.
4. *Bhagavadgita*, 7.17-8.
5. *Matthew*, 6.28-9.

Temper is a quality that at a critical moment brings out the best in steel and the worst in people.

A Visit to Europe

SWAMI SMARANANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

Back to France

We reached our Gretz centre by 3 pm. In the evening, Swami Gangananda took us for a walk in a forest which is the property of the King of Morocco. After dinner at 7:30 pm, I met the few devotees present and answered some questions.

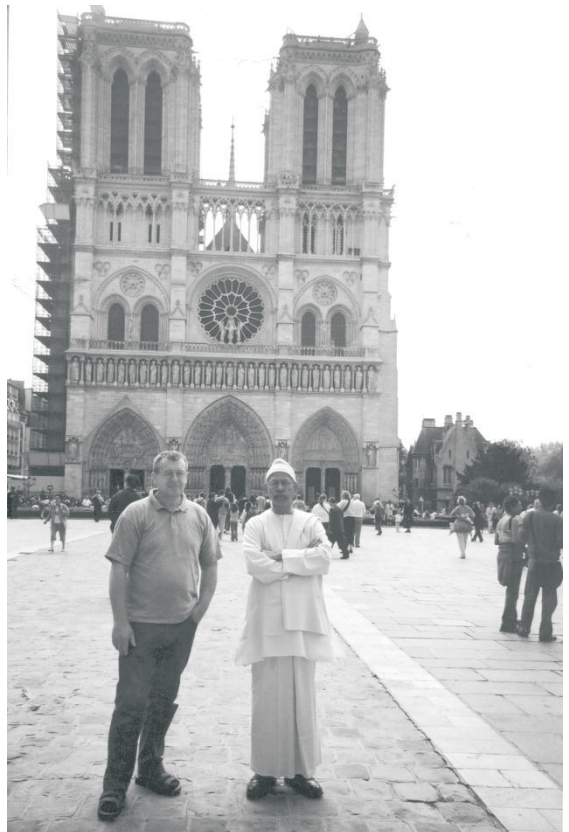
Next morning Swami Devatmananda took Dr Suneeti and me to Notre-dame Cathedral. It is a historic landmark. Built in huge proportions, this famous cathedral is imposing in appearance. Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* has made it all the more famous. The square in front of it is also quite big. Wide roads lined with huge ancient buildings make the place interesting. This place is an island surrounded by River Seine. It is a narrow river, but full of water. We returned to the ashrama by 12:45 pm and had lunch. Prayer in the shrine was at 6:30 pm, followed by the usual meditation.

The next morning, again, Devatmananda took us to the famous Louvre Museum, in the same area, the central part of Paris, where Notre-dame is also situated. This museum exhibits the works of famous painters and sculptors. The art of Europe, with a bit of Greece and Egypt thrown in, makes this museum one of the biggest and best in the world. Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo and many others' works can be seen here, including the famous *Mona Lisa* painting. It is not very big. We spent nearly two hours here and returned to the ashrama. It can take a connoisseur of Western art many more hours or days to see ev-

everything here.

In the evening Swami Veetamohananda (head of Gretz centre) returned from London, where he had gone to attend a seminar. After dinner, I met some devotees and answered some questions.

I spent the next morning quietly at the ashrama. At 5 pm we two left for the airport on our onward journey to England. Devatma-



In front of Notre-dame Cathedral

nanda and Gangananda saw us off.

England

We landed at Heathrow at 7:45 pm Greenwich time. Dr Ila, wife of Dr Suneeti Basu, and a devotee by name Pradipta Das met us at the airport. I was to stay at Suneeti's house for the night and move to our ashrama at Bourne End on Sunday evening. Their house is quite far away from the airport.

Both Suneeti and Ila are physicians. They run a clinic called Surgery in England. Their daughter Uma is in the higher secondary school. Their large and nice house is situated in a peaceful locality.



At Cambridge University

On Sunday morning, Suneeti took me to Cambridge University. It being a Sunday, all its thirty-four colleges were closed, though in some of them Sunday services were going on, so one could go inside only after 1 pm. At Trinity College, the entrance fee is £ 2! I thought it pointless to spend so much to see those buildings. After Oxford, Cambridge is the oldest university in England.

In the afternoon we went to Vivekananda Human Centre's annual function at the YMCA hall. It is managed by Ram Chandra Saha, who hails from Faridpur in Bangladesh. He has or-

ganized this centre with the help of his friends and holds cultural functions there. I presided over the annual function. There were nearly 250 people in the audience. Swami Dayatmananda, head of our London centre, who was the special guest, said that the audience was bigger than usual. Other speakers were Dr Nandakumar, Director of the London branch of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, one MP of the Liberal Party, Mr Simon Haynes, Mr Mark Bickerman, Director, International Office, London Metropolitan University, and Prof Alan Hunter, Professor of Peace Studies in Coventry University and a specialist on China. After the meeting, I left with Swami

Dayatmananda for our Bourne End ashrama, reaching there at 9 pm. This centre is on a 10-acre land with plenty of trees. Apart from the main building there are two other buildings. The locality where the centre is situated is quiet and beautiful, with plenty of greenery.

Next day was comparatively a restful day. I met a few devotees who came to the ashrama. In the evening we had a dinner at Dilip Mukherjee's house, not far away.

He and his family are close devotees. They have built a nice new house, which has a beautiful shrine room.

On the 8th morning Mr Dilip Lakhani, a good friend of our London centre, took me to the Swami Narayan temple, built in recent times. Bhogilal too accompanied us.

The temple complex is quite big, and that sparse commodity—parking space—is also well provided for. Clad in Bulgarian limestone and designed in the Gujarati style, the temple is impressive. The interior is decorated

with intricate artwork carved out of Italian marble, like the Dilwara temples at Mount Abu in Rajasthan.

Swami Narayan, a great saint of Gujarat, lived nearly 200 years ago. Costing £ 15 million (about Rs 100 crore), this temple was built by the Swami Narayana sect in London. With its headquarters in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, it has a vast following and many branches. This temple also has a museum depicting India's spiritual heritage.

I met Swami Atmaswarupa Das, head of their London centre, and talked with him for half an hour. One interesting feature is that children from various schools visit the temple every day. They are told about Hinduism. These children are mostly English and they evince keen interest in the subject. The authorities of the temple requested me to say a few words to them for some three minutes, which I

did.

On the early morning of 9th, we proceeded to the airport, as I was to take the flight to Paris on my way to Mumbai. Swami Dayatmananda, Swami Shivarupananda and Bhogilal saw me off. The flight was slightly delayed.

At Paris airport I had to go to another terminal nearly 3 km away by the airport shuttle service. Paris airport is so vast that if you get down at the wrong place, you can have a lot of trouble!

The Mumbai flight reached there at 1:30 am (10 July). Swami Vagishananda (head of our Mumbai centre) and others met me at the airport. I reached the ashrama at 2:15 am and left for Kolkata next evening.

Thus ended a hectic, but educative tour of Europe, which was till a few year ago the nerve centre of the world! *

Human Ways

I dreamt I had an interview with God.

'So, you would like to interview me?' God asked.

'If you have the time,' I said.

God smiled and said, 'My time is eternity. So, what questions do you have in mind for me?'

'What surprises you the most about humankind?'

God answered:

'That they get bored with childhood, that they rush to grow up, and then long to be children again.

'That they lose their health to make money ... and then lose their money to restore their health.

'That by thinking anxiously about the future, they forget the present and end up living neither in the present nor in the future.

'That they live as if they would never die, and die as though they had never lived.'

—from cyberspace

Sri Ramakrishna's Impact on Contemporary Indian Society

DR JAYASREE MUKHERJEE

The nineteenth century was for India a period of great expansion of British imperialism vis-à-vis Indian nationalism. The East India Company's rule was consolidated into the administration of the British Raj. Side by side, different socio-religious and cultural movements were initiated by different personalities in various parts of the country with the search for national identity as their fundamental aim. The inherent conflict between British interests and Indian aspirations was kept concealed for some time, but since the seventies of the nineteenth century Indian nationalism became self-conscious and assertive. Numerous factors, big and small, led to the flowering of these self-conscious nationalist sentiments. The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement with its seat in Bengal constituted a major factor towards this development.

Stress on Spiritual Humanism

The central figure of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement was Sri Ramakrishna himself, who was an original man with complete Self-realization. He became a symbol of the national soul. He was accepted as one of the prophets of the new age, not because of his acceptance of the principal tenets of traditional Hinduism (implying worship of God in various forms and through images) and the Hindu way of life, but because of the comprehensiveness of his vision and the largeness of his spirit. His ardent belief in the validity of all faiths and his stress on spiritual humanism, as distinct from modern secular humanism, fitted well with the search for

identity of the Indian self.

Influence on Noted Contemporaries

Sri Ramakrishna's inner spirituality and utter simplicity cast a magnetic spell on persons who came into close contact with him. Even Bhairavi Brahmani and Tota Puri, his two gurus, were profoundly struck by Ramakrishna's depth of realization. It was Bhairavi who first openly declared that Sri Ramakrishna was an incarnation of God.¹ The Vaishnava leader Vaishnavacharan and the Tantric scholar Pandit Gaurikanta Tarkabhushan heartily endorsed her view.² Gaurikanta came to Dakshineswar in 1870 to obtain his spiritual guidance. Pandit Narayan Shastri, an orthodox Vedantic scholar, took sannyasa from Ramakrishna and spread the latter's name in his homeland in Rajputana. Pandit Padmalochan Tarkalankar, the chief pundit at the court of the Maharaja of Burdwan, came to revere Ramakrishna as God-incarnate. Krishna Kishore, an ardent devotee of Rama hailing from Ariadaha, was benefited by Ramakrishna's spiritual guidance. Two Tantric sadhakas, Chandra and Girija, coming from East Bengal, received spiritual encouragement from the saint. (83-4) Even Tota Puri's vision of the ultimate Reality was changed to some extent under Ramakrishna's influence. (88-9) During this period Ramakrishna also met, among others, Dayananda Sarasvati of the Arya Samaj and Bhagavandas Babaji, the great Vaishnava saint of Kalna.³

The Influence that Triggered Swami Vivekananda's Arrival

Thus Ramakrishna's fame as a man of

God spread first among the traditional scholars and religious preachers. In course of a few years he began to attract the attention of the English-educated classes of Bengal, and even of the Europeans residing in this country. Among the latter may be counted Principal W W Hastie of the General Assembly's Institution (now Scottish Church College), Calcutta. In course of explaining the word 'trance' contained in a poem by Wordsworth, Hastie told his students that if they wanted to know the real meaning of it, they might go to Ramakrishna of Dakshineswar. This prompted some of his students, including Narendranath Datta (later Swami Vivekananda), to go to Dakshineswar in search of the saint.⁴ Hastie thus helped a lot in focusing the attention of the educated youths of Bengal on Ramakrishna.

Influence on the Brahmos

More important was the role of the outstanding Brahmo leader Keshab Chandra Sen. In fact, Keshab and, following him, other Brahmos publicized Ramakrishna before the larger public of Bengal through their speeches and writings. The discovery of Ramakrishna was one of the greatest gifts of the Brahmos to the Bengali intelligentsia of the nineteenth century. Ironically enough, many Brahmos in subsequent times dubbed Ramakrishna as a protagonist of Hindu religious orthodoxy, which, in fact, he was not.

Influence on Keshab Chandra Sen

At his very first meeting with Ramakrishna on 15 March 1875, Keshab Chandra Sen was literally spellbound by the simplicity and depth of the saint. He recorded his experience as follows: 'We met one (a sincere Hindu devotee) not long ago, and were charmed by the depth, penetration and simplicity of his spirit.' He admitted further, 'Hinduism must have in

it a deep sense of beauty, truth and goodness to inspire such men as these.'⁵ At a time when the Westernized and rational Brahmos cut themselves off from Hindu moorings, such admiring comments about Ramakrishna from one of their topmost leaders proved to be a turning point in Bengal's socio-religious life.

Keshab himself was deeply influenced by Ramakrishna. His autobiography *Jivanveda*, Trailokyanath Sanyal's biography *Keshab-charit* (1885) and Pratap Chandra Mozoomdar's *Life and Teachings of Keshub Chander Sen* (1887) corroborate this point. Mozoomdar, a close associate of Keshab, wrote that Ramakrishna had 'a powerful effect upon Keshub's catholic mind'.⁶ Through mental anguish and sufferings following the Cooch Behar mar-

The discovery of Ramakrishna was one of the greatest gifts of the Brahmos to the Bengali intelligentsia of the nineteenth century. Ironically enough, many Brahmos in subsequent times dubbed Ramakrishna as a protagonist of Hindu religious orthodoxy, which, in fact, he was not.

riage, Keshab spontaneously accepted the Motherhood of God. Mozoomdar further wrote, 'And now the sympathy, friendship, and example of Paramahansa converted the Motherhood of God into a subject of special culture with him. The greater part of year 1879 witnessed the development.'⁷ It became altogether a new feature of the revival which Keshab was bringing about in the Brahmo Samaj.

Another Brahmo stalwart, Vijaykrishna Goswami, admitted that, inspired by the Paramahansa, Keshab started to cook his food himself and tried to instil the spirit of renunciation into the Samaj.⁸

Keshab was the first person to compile and publish Ramakrishna's teachings entitled *Paramahamser Ukti* in Bengali in 1878. Within a

few years there took place a transformation of his mental attitude. The rationalist leader was caught by a devotional spirit. He built up before long the Church of New Dispensation, or Navavidhan (25 January 1880), depending on the worship of the Motherhood of God,⁹ unity of religions and assimilation of Hindu polytheism into Brahmoism.

In this connection we may note a fundamental difference between Keshab and Ramakrishna, as pointed out by Brajendranath Seal during a session of the Calcutta Parliament of Religions (1937): 'While Keshab's Navavidhan implied eclecticism or synthesis, Ramakrishna's system was based on syncretism.'¹⁰

Suniti Devi, the Maharani of Cooch Behar, acknowledged Ramakrishna's great influence on her father Keshab while talking to Francis Younghusband, who, during the celebrations of Ramakrishna's birth centenary in Gloucesterplace, England, on 27 March 1936, drove home this point to the audience as chairman of the meeting.¹¹ Even Keshab's mother frequently went to Dakshineswar.¹²

Influence on Other Brahmos

Following Keshab, other Brahmos also started to admire Ramakrishna, propagate his ideals and reorient their socio-religious outlook. Mozoomdar wrote the first English biography of Ramakrishna, entitled 'The Hindu Saint' and published in the *Theistic Quarterly Review* in 1879 (later published in book form entitled *Paramahansa Ramakrishna*). This biography played a vital role in introducing Ramakrishna to Westerners like the celebrated German indologist Max Muller.

Vijaykrishna Goswami's shift towards Vaishnavism was to a large extent due to the influence of Ramakrishna, whom he held in the highest regard.¹³ Shivanath Shastri was influenced very much by Ramakrishna's universalism in religion.¹⁴ Girishchandra Sen wrote two books on him entitled *Paramahamser Ukti* and *Sankshipta Jivani*.

Brahmos Spread Ramakrishna's Message

History shows that many Brahmos not only became Ramakrishna's admirers, but also proclaimed his message to the educated public of Bengal through their speeches and writings since 1875. In this connection the reports published in the *Indian Mirror*, *Sunday Mirror*, *New Dispensation*, *Dharmatattwa*, *Sulabh Samachar*, *Parichariki* and others deserve special mention.¹⁵ The *Indian Mirror* of 11 December 1881 reported that Paramahamsadeva was spreading 'Love' and 'Devotion' among the educated classes of Calcutta.¹⁶ In its issue of 19 August 1886, the paper reported that Ramakrishna had succeeded in reforming the character of some youths whose morals had been corrupt. Graduates and undergraduates of the University of Calcutta vied with one another in becoming his followers, and some of them had already renounced the world and become ascetics.¹⁷ While this statement contains much truth, the formal acceptance of *sannyasa* by Ramakrishna's disciples took place not during his lifetime but after his death, under the leadership of Narendranath. The *Dharmatattwa* of 31 August 1886 recorded that more than one hundred people, including some prominent Brahmos, had participated in the cremation ceremony of Ramakrishna at Baranagore. It also recorded that a special ceremony had been held at the Navavidhan temple in his honour on the fourth day after the cremation (20 August 1886).¹⁸ Many of his followers, both monastic and lay, had been Brahmos or even atheists in their early life. Documents are numerous to prove that in course of a few years (1875-86) Ramakrishna's impact rapidly spread among the elite of Calcutta and its suburbs. The *Englishman*, an organ of the Anglo-Indian community, also observed in its issue of 20 August 1886, 'The late Paramahansa was held in the highest respect by all sections of the Hindu community. The educated Hindus appreciated his teachings highly, and among his followers were many graduates and undergraduates of the Univer-

sity.¹⁹ Men and women of different castes, creeds and classes visited Ramakrishna and sat spellbound before him for hours together, listening to his words with rapt attention. Religious talks and discussions took place and devotional songs were sung in many households centring round him.²⁰ Ramakrishna on his part was also curious to meet prominent personalities of the time²¹ and to see objects of interest personally.

Influence on the Elite of Calcutta

It is interesting to speculate why, since 1875, the educated *bhadralok* (gentlemen) of Bengal started to cluster round Sri Ramakrishna, who was so much different from them in his education, culture and way of living. Ramakrishna did not have formal Western or even oriental education. He had a bare knowledge of the three 'Rs and with some difficulty could sign his name as 'Ramakesto'.²² He was almost a rustic. Second, Ramakrishna was not a traditional monk. He never used saffron robes or followed monastic rules as laid down in the shastras. In fact, he was a married man living with his wife. His lifestyle was simple, but not, strictly speaking, monastic. As recorded by one of his intimate householder disciples, Mahendranath Gupta, popularly known as M or Master Mahashaya, Ramakrishna wore a white dhoti with a red border, used polished slippers and hookahs and slept in a cot under a mosquito net.²³ Third, the Bengali language he used was neither Sanskritized nor anglicized. It was instead very close to the language of a Bengali peasant. In appearance and ordinary conversation he was a humble and unsophisticated villager. A contemporary document describes him as 'the commonest of the common. He came from the people, he smelt of the earth, and he talked like the peasant'.²⁴

His cultural world was pastoral. Socially, however, he came from the highest caste (brahmin) of Bengal.

Notwithstanding these limitations (if they are limitations at all), Ramakrishna was able to attract the elite of Calcutta and its suburbs by his magnetic spiritual personality. As Mahatma Gandhi observed, the story of Ramakrishna's life was 'a story of religion in practice'.²⁵ His complete identification of words with deeds, his profoundly spiritual living and remarkable ability of expressing the highest philosophical thoughts in plain and simple words—all this cast a magnetic spell on all who came into contact with him. He was able to attract the attention of the new generation that was growing up in Bengal in a

Ramakrishna was not an exponent of orthodox Hinduism, but infused into it a new element of toleration and social service, liberalism and dynamism. He asked his disciples not to stand in isolation from the rest of the world, but to live in it and render selfless service to suffering humanity in a spirit of God worship.

patriotic and nationalistic climate generated in the 1870s by the writings of Bankimchandra Chatterjee and the orations of Surendranath Banerjee. Keshab Chandra Sen, who had been the idol of Bengali youth in the sixties of the nineteenth century, was outshone by Bankim and Surendranath in the seventies and eighties. It was an age when the spirit of nationalism was growing, and the anglicized babu was no longer an object of veneration in the imagination of the educated people. The youthful generation of Bengal in and around Calcutta, already conscious of their dignity as a part of the Indian nation, did not find an echo of their heart in Brahmoism or Christianity. They turned to Ramakrishna, the protago-

nist of Neo-Hinduism, as the messiah of the new age. Ramakrishna was not an exponent of orthodox Hinduism, but infused into it a new element of toleration and social service, liberalism and dynamism. He asked his disciples not to stand in isolation from the rest of the world, but to live in it and render selfless service to suffering humanity in a spirit of God worship.

Even the Sophisticated Were Not Excepted

Even some elite of this age experienced an inner conflict between their own outlook and beliefs and Ramakrishna's life and teachings. Their fascination for monotheism, Westernization and intellectualism could not be easily adjusted with the traditional Hindu beliefs of Ramakrishna, who had no educational, urban or social sophistication. Yet they could not help being enchanted by the saint of Dakshineswar. This feeling was beautifully expressed by Pratap Chandra Mozoomdar, who wrote, in 1879, in *The Theistic Quarterly Review*:

My mind is still floating in the luminous atmosphere which that wonderful man diffuses around him whenever and wherever he goes. My mind is not yet disenchanted of the mysterious and indefinable pathos which he pours into it whenever he meets me. What is there common between him and me? I, a Europeanised, civilized, self-centred, semi-sceptical so-called educated reasoner, and he, a poor, illiterate, shrunken, unpolished, diseased, half-dressed, half-idolaltious, friendless Hindu devotee? Why should I sit long hours to attend to him, I who have listened to Disraeli and Fawcett, Stanley and Max Mueller, and a whole host of European scholars and divines? I who am an ardent disciple and follower of Christ, a friend and admirer of liberal-minded Christian missionaries and preachers, a devoted adherent and worker of the rationalistic Brahma-Samaj — why should I be spellbound to hear him? And it is not only I, but dozens like me who do the same. He has been interviewed and examined by many, crowds pour in to visit and talk with him. Some of our clever intellectual fools have found nothing in him, some of the contemptuous

Christian missionaries would call him an impostor, or a self-deluded enthusiast. I have weighed their objections well, and what I write now I write deliberately.²⁶

Some Unpleasant Reactions

Contemporary reaction to Ramakrishna was not always pleasant. Upadhyay Brahmandhab was originally a critic of Ramakrishna and refused to recognize him as an avatara.²⁷ Another contemporary scholar described Ramakrishna as

an illiterate priest, crude, raw, unmodern and the commonest of the common. ... He respected women, in the only way open to Indians, by calling them 'mother', and avoiding them. He would not perform the daily rituals. He would allow non-Brahmins to be initiated. ... Yet, and this is the tragedy of the situation, with all the help of the dynamic personality of Swami Vivekananda, Paramahansa Deb's influence has not succeeded in shaking our social foundations. A number of people have been inspired, no doubt, but the masses have not trembled in their sleep.²⁸

Background of His Disciples and Admirers

An analysis of the class composition of the early admirers and followers of Ramakrishna reveals that most of them came from the Western-educated middle class of the Bengali society, Latu (later Swami Adbhutananda) or Rasik Hadi being exceptions. Many of them had some Christian or Brahmo leanings before their meetings with Ramakrishna, and a few were sceptics or even atheists. Brahmo leaders like Keshab Sen, Pratap Mozoomdar and Vijay Goswami belonged to this class. Most of his monastic disciples²⁹ also came from this class. While Vivekananda and Saradananda had Western education, urban sophistication and a Brahmo background, Shivananda, Premananda and Ramakrishnananda came from non-metropolitan areas, representing a traditional Hindu background, education and culture. Some of the monastic disciples were more educated and affluent than others. Four

were married, while the rest were unmarried. A striking exception was Adbhutananda, who was an illiterate Bihari coming from the grass-roots level.

Of the non-monastic disciples of Ramakrishna the majority belonged to the educated middle class, but exceptions were also there. A wider degree of variation may be noticed in their social background, family status, economic condition, cultural outlook and religious attitude. There were writers like Girishchandra Ghosh and Nagendranath Gupta, zamindars like Rani Rasmani and Balaram Bose, publishers like Upendranath Mukherjee and Haramohan Mitra, scientists like Ramchandra Datta, officers like Purnachandra Ghosh and teachers like Mahendranath Gupta. There were big zamindars like Mathuranath Biswas, petty clerks like Prankrishna Mukherjee, actresses like Binodini and sweepers like Rasik Hadi. Their religious mentality ranged from scepticism (as in the case of Girish Ghosh) to intense piety and devotion (as in the case of Durgacharan Nag). They came from diverse castes such as brahmin, *vaidya*, *kayastha*, *subarnabanik*, *mahisya* and even the so-called untouchable castes.³⁰

They were mostly educated, but some were illiterate. Among the women devotees there were educated nuns like Gauri Ma, childless widows like Golap Ma and Gopaler- Ma, and actresses like Binodini. Captain Viswanath Upadhyay, one of Ramakrishna's household disciples, was a Nepalese and had served in the army.³¹ The Rajasthani philosopher Narayan Shastri took sannyasa from Ramakrishna in 1875. Lakshminarayan was a wealthy Marwari devotee and Hirananda a Sindhi graduate.³²

True, the majority of devotees and admirers of Ramakrishna came from an educated Bengali middle-class background with

roots in Calcutta. But this does not mean that his influence was confined to them. Even during his lifetime (1836-86) his ideas and influence spread beyond the intelligentsia to other sections of the Bengali society including the Bauls and the Kartabhajas.³³ His name even crossed the boundaries of Bengal. During his lifetime, however, there was little of a movement. The only tangible advance was the foundation of the Ramakrishna Order in an embryonic form by the Master himself during his last illness (1885-86).³⁴

A Realistic Appraisal of Sri Ramakrishna

Dr Sumit Sarkar's assertion that 'the world of his devotees had a lower middle-class, indeed clerical, ambience',³⁵ that the

He represented in a sense the old India, and yet had a message for the new India that was emerging. His teachings of 'Jato mat tato path, As many faiths so many paths' and 'Jiva is Shiva' not only showed the validity of all faiths and spiritual humanism, but also took cognizance of the individuality and freedom of man.

outer resentment of the devotees 'had been sublimated through a religion of inner devotion and social passivity', (108) and that Ramakrishna 'helped hierarchy and oppression to endure by making them appear less unendurable' (114) are too superficial generalizations to require any serious notice. Such charges cannot be substantiated. Dr Sarkar's assertion that tensions in gender relations within the household drove men and women paradoxically to Ramakrishna as an alternative is also false and misleading. Neither did Ramakrishna's devotees show any frustration in excess of what is common with the average man, nor did Ramakrishna ever preach any social passivism and escapism.³⁶ He always stressed ac-

tivism, spiritual and social. He was a spiritual guide not only to monks but also to householders. He represented in a sense the old India, and yet had a message for the new India that was emerging. His teachings of 'Jato mat tato path, As many faiths so many paths' and 'Jiva is Shiva' not only showed the validity of all faiths and spiritual humanism, but also took cognizance of the individuality and freedom of man. He rescued religion from the trammels of tenet and dogma, rite and liturgy. During Sri Ramakrishna's lifetime his devotees came mostly from the same classes from which the Brahmos also sprang. But while the Brahmo movement remained primarily an elitist movement, the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement overstepped bourgeois limits. The way Ramakrishna lived and the language he spoke were closer to the masses than to the elite. As years rolled by, his impact widened and deepened. Apart from the writings of the Brahmos, two remarkable books were written by Ramakrishna's disciples in the 1880s. These were *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsadeber Jiban Vrittanta* by Ramchandra Datta and *Paramahansa Srimad Ramakrishner Upadesh* by Sureshchandra Datta. Vivekananda's Chicago success (1893) and his subsequent activities, the work of his colleagues and writings of scholars like CH Tawney (1896), Max Mueller (1896), M (1902-32), Romain Rolland (1929) and many others gave currency to Ramakrishna's sublime ideas within and outside India.³⁷ As a near-contemporary eyewitness, Prof Tawney wrote that 'There can be no doubt that he [Ramakrishna] has exercised a potent influence over the minds of the young men trained in our Bengal colleges, and his teaching must count for an important factor in the present movement, which it is the fashion to call the Hindu revival.'³⁸ In this connection, mention should be made of the voluminous writings of Vivekananda, Abhedananda, Saradananda and others towards the dissemination of Sri Ramakrishna's ideas. How his ideas developed into a movement after his demise is an

interesting and important chapter in the cultural history of modern India. *

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 30. In Bengal the traditional fourfold caste structure—brahmin, kshatriya, vaishya and shudra—was not prominent.
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Men often scoffed from a distance at this man [Sri Ramakrishna] of no learning, and yet when they came to him, very soon they bowed their heads before this man of God and ceased to scoff and remained to pray.

—Jawaharlal Nehru

Sanskrit Studies and Comparative Philology in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-century Europe

SWAMI TATHAGATANANDA

The marvellous universal destiny and impact of the Sanskrit language through the long ages is twofold. Its divine inspiration helps the individual to go beyond a finite concept of self and to develop a divine personality as well as the worldly one with which he has solely identified. Sanskrit accomplishes this through the medium of the Indian sacred and classical literature. The instruction India's literature conveys through Sanskrit is that of 'the eternal, the universal and the spiritual in man', urging people to discover their spiritual consciousness. The Upanishads and other sacred Hindu texts introduced to the West through eminent Sanskritists and Indologists are the great conveyors of spiritual enlightenment to the world.

Sanskrit is also uniquely suited to have an eternal and boundless relationship with the world due to its continuity in Indian tradition and culture. Evolving centuries before the Greek, the cultural continuity of Sanskrit is noted by Will Durant in *The Story of Civilization*: 'The language of the Indo-Aryans should be of special interest to us, for Sanskrit is one of the oldest in that 'Indo-European' group of languages to which our own speech belongs. We feel for a moment a strange sense of cultural continuity across great stretches of time and space when we observe the similarity—in Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and English.'¹

Long before the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Filippo Sassetti (1540-88) was the first to propose a definite relationship between Sanskrit and the major European languages. While living in Goa, South India, between 1583 and 1588, he discovered that Hindu scholars wrote and used an ancient lan-

guage called Sanskrit, previously unknown in the West. While translating the medical treatise *Raja Nighantu* he noticed a relationship between Sanskrit and his native Italian language. In the late eighteenth century, the French scholar Father Cœurdoux also noticed the affinity of languages with Sanskrit.² But neither scholar gave it a more profound study. It was left to Sir William Jones (1746-94) to indicate the richness, freshness and parental role of Sanskrit. In 1786, at the annual celebration of the Asiatic Society, which he founded two years earlier, his remarks reveal the profound scholarship he was to apply to comparative Sanskrit studies:

The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure: more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either. Yet bearing to both of them a strong affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed that no philologist could examine them all three without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists. There is a similar reason though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the Gothic and the Celtic, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the Sanskrit; and the Old Persian might be added to the same family.³

In Jones' *Works* we find a discussion of the deeper significance of these findings:

Of the philosophical schools, it will be sufficient here to remark that the first *Nyaya* seems analogous to the Peripatetic; the second, sometimes called *Vaisesika*, to the Ionic; the two *Mimamsas*, of which the second is often distinguished by

the name of Vedanta, to the Platonic; the first *Samkhya* to the Italic; and the second of Patanjali to the Stoic philosophy; so that Gautama corresponds with Aristotle, Kanada with Thales, Jaimini with Socrates, Vyasa with Plato, Kapila with Pythagoras, and Patanjali with Zeno.⁴

Max Müller (1823-1900)—who regarded comparative philology as ‘the most important discovery of the nineteenth century with respect to the ancient history of mankind’⁵—corroborated Jones’ findings. About this major event David Kopf has written that Jones ‘related Hindu civilization to that of Europe and reanimated the resplendent Hindu past.’⁶ India’s history and culture were now firmly established in the West.

In this article we shall trace the broad influence of some of the early Sanskrit translations and Sanskrit dictionaries as well as the disseminating work of the Asiatic Society and its inspired counterparts in Europe that laid the foundation for Sanskrit studies in the West. The indefatigable dedication of the first inspired Sanskritists inspire our own honour and respect for their role in bringing the Upanishads to the West. The significant appearance of comparative Sanskrit studies and philological studies in the West during the ‘Oriental Renaissance’ are woven into this Westward journey. Their formal introduction appeared in 1816 with the new field of comparative philology founded by Franz Bopp, who together with August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767-1845) transferred the focus of Sanskrit studies from Paris and London to Germany, with tremendous beneficial consequences.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, scholars and writers were intent on breaking the Christian monopoly on spiritual revelations and searched for proof that similar religious experiences existed in cultures other than and prior to their own. This effort was supported by the work of several French Jesuit missionaries to the Maduran Mission in India, who studied Sanskrit in depth. One of these, Father Pons, wrote a Latinized Sanskrit gram-

mar, translated the *Amarakosha*, and consigned 168 Sanskrit manuscripts, including principal grammatical and classical Upanishadic works, from Chandernagore⁷ to Paris—the first such collection in a Western library.⁸

Anquetil-Duperron’s *Oupnek’hat* Inaugurates a New Era in Sanskrit Studies

The eminent linguist and brilliant French theologian, Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (1731-1805), inaugurated a new era in the history of human knowledge and understanding. His translations of the Upanishads created a great interest among Westerners to study the Sanskrit language.

His first great achievement was to travel to India to obtain manuscripts to complete the French translation of the *Vendidad Sade* (1759) after discovering a facsimile of four leaves at the Bibliothèque du Roi in Paris in 1754. These had been collected at Surat by George Bouchier in 1718 and subsequently brought to Europe by Richard Cobbe in 1727; they were kept at Oxford University. Determined to decipher them, he went to India for help. A little more than a decade later, his *Avesta, Ouvrage de Zoroastre* (1771) was the first Asian religious text to be published in the West.

This monumental work of scholarship complete, he decided to study the Sanskrit language. He collected Sanskrit manuscripts of the Vedas and acquired three famous Sanskrit dictionaries—the *Amarakosha*, *Vyakarana* and *Namamala*. In 1775, his friend Ūmile Gentil, a French resident of the court of Shuja-Uddaulah in Faizabad, gave Anquetil Prince Dara Shukoh’s Persian translation of fifty Upanishads. It may be noted that they had been brought to France by the traveler, François Bernier,⁹ in 1671 and had been published in Delhi in 1756-57. In 1786, four Upanishads, which he translated, appeared in his *Recherches sur l’Inde*. *Recherches* was part of a series edited by Jean Bernoulli and published at Berlin between 1786 and 1791. In 1787, Anquetil

completed a French translation of Prince Dara Shukoh's *Sirr-i Akbar*. Giving it a deeper consideration, he went back to the Persian and completed a more faithful transcription with greater clarity in Latin, *Oupnek'hat ou Theologia et Philosophia*, in 1796. The fifty Latin versions were published in two volumes in Strasbourg in 1801 and 1802 under the title *Oupnek'hat*. The monumental work was accomplished after forty years of dedicated struggle in an attic in war-torn France.

The popularity of the *Oupnek'hat* during the Romantic era was expressed by Jean-Denis Lanjuinais, who wrote that it was 'the most useful book one can study in a European language to gain an understanding of the ancient systems of religion and philosophy of the Brahmins'.¹⁰ Although the *Oupnek'hat* was partially translated into German in 1808, it was Anquetil-Duperron's Latin translation that highly influenced Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860). Max Müller confirmed this in the introduction to the first volume of his famous series, *The Sacred Books of the East*:

This translation, though it attracted considerable interest among scholars, was written in so utterly unintelligible a style that it required the lynx-like perspicacity of an intrepid philosopher such as Schopenhauer to discover a thread through such a labyrinth. Schopenhauer, however, not only found and followed such a thread, but he had the courage to proclaim to an incredulous age the vast treasures of thought that were lying buried beneath that fearful jargon.¹¹

It also influenced Müller's successor, Paul Deussen (1845-1919), whose sixty Upanishads rendered in 1897 were all based on the Sanskrit originals; five were actually borrowed from Anquetil-Duperron's *Oupnek'hat* because they had not yet been recovered. The earlier essays by Henry Thomas Colebrooke (1765- 1837) on the Vedas in the eighth volume of *Asiatic Researches* in 1805 and by Friedrich von Schlegel (1772-1829) on the language and wisdom of the Hindus in 1808 had sealed the

discoveries of this initial period of Indology. Therefore, the authority of Anquetil's version prevailed. It was reissued with an elaborate discussion of the *Oupnek'hat* by the German scholar Albrecht Weber (1825-1901) in the 1850s, an event which served to highlight the important role Anquetil played in the furthering of nascent Indic studies.

The wide circulation of the *Oupnek'hat* (and, perhaps, the lesser circulation of his earlier French translation in 1775) served to attract the minds of the greatest philosophers of Europe. The publication of his Upanishads lit a beacon of hope for mankind. Robert Ernest Hume (1877-1948) has written in the introduction to his *Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, 'No edition of the Upanishads in any language preceded his, except Sir William Jones' English translation of the *Isa Upanishad* (London, 1799).'¹² The interested reader may find more about Anquetil's dedicated and adventurous life in the present author's book, *Glimpses of Great Lives* (New York, 1999).

The arrival of the Upanishads in France was followed by publication of numerous translations of the Vedas by French missionaries. The *Ezour-Vedam* (*Yajur Veda*) was brought to Voltaire (1694-1778) by Maudave, a knight returning from India, in 1760. Voltaire officially presented it to the Bibliothèque du Roi in 1761. It translated it into German in 1794.¹³ J V Nayadu writes in the *Hinduism of the Upanishads* (1950) that Voltaire saw in the *Yajur Veda* the 'most precious', and perhaps the oldest gift, 'for which the West was ever indebted to the East.' In the foreword to his *Essai sur les mœurs*, Voltaire affirmed that the wisdom of India had come at the right moment, allowing him to correct the constricted view of India that had been propagated since the seventeenth-century by J B Bossuet in his *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*.¹⁴

Sir William Jones and the Asiatic Society

The noted philologist and linguist Sir William Jones was highly instrumental in the

enlightenment of the West and the dissemination of India's immortal ancient wisdom embodied in the sacred literature. Arriving in Calcutta in 1783 as puisne judge of the Supreme Court of India, Jones immediately devoted himself to Sanskrit and the translation of ancient Sanskrit texts. In his book *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions* Arthur Versluis confirmed that Jones had difficulty gaining access to Hindu sacred books and Sanskrit, could find no brahmin willing to teach this unbelieving foreigner, and only with great effort was he able to find a Hindu physician who taught him enough Sanskrit to translate the *Laws of Manu* and the *Hitopadesha*, both of which were later influential on the transcendentalists.¹⁵

Encouraged by Warren Hastings (1733-1818), the first governor-general of India and a great patron of Sanskrit studies, Jones founded the Asiatic Society in Calcutta on 15 January 1784. It was a centre for Eastern studies and Sanskrit studies in particular. The *Asiatic Researches* published by the Society record that Jones acknowledged that India was the centre of all research the members would conduct within the prescribed geographical limits.¹⁶ *Asiatic Researches* swiftly disseminated India's Sanskrit lore throughout England, Germany and France and inspired all of Europe to study Sanskrit. The first generation of Indic scholars was vigorously interested in the research and publications of the Asiatic Society.

The Soci  t   Asiatique was formed in Paris (1822) and the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland was founded in London in 1823. The Royal Asiatic Society sponsored the Oriental Translation Fund in 1828 and thus ensured the access of Oriental literature to the West. Within the next two decades, the Asiatic Society also inspired the foundation of the American Oriental Society in New Haven (1842) and the German Oriental Society (Deutsche Morganlendische Gessellschaft) in Berlin (1844). London's Royal Asiatic Society established additional branches in Bom-

bay, Ceylon, China and Malaya.¹⁷ The spirit of Sir Jones, to quote a modern scholar, 'is still very much alive over the years through the activities of his dream-child, the Asiatic Society. It has been a beacon light in Oriental learning not only in India but also throughout the entire civilized world.'¹⁸

Colebrooke, who founded the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, wrote on Hindu mathematics and placed Sanskrit studies on a scientific footing. According to the *Centenary Review*, which gave a complete account of the Society's work, he produced 'nothing that did not at once command the highest attention from the public, and notwithstanding the great advance that has been made in Oriental researches of late years, his papers are still looked upon as models of their kind.'¹⁹ The titles of articles that Colebrooke and others contributed to the early volumes of *Asiatic Researches* display a broad range of study. This indicates their desire to understand India through Sanskrit and all things Indian.²⁰ They had a lively interest in India and often belonged to both societies.²¹ Together with Anquetil-Duperron's *Oupnek'hat*, the remarkable works of Sir Charles Wilkins (1750-1836), Jones and Colebrooke proved to be the greatest inspiration for the American Transcendentalist writers, who were consumed with a common interest in Indian philosophy.

In 1786 Jones linked Sanskrit to classical Latin and Greek and created the modern notion of an Indo-European family of languages. Thus Jones laid the groundwork for the science of comparative philology founded in 1816 by Franz Bopp, who wrote his *System of Conjugation in the Sanskrit Language* the same year.

Jones' Translation of the *Abhijnana Shakuntala*

Kalidasa's *Abhijnana Shakuntala* was the first Sanskrit drama ever to be translated into a European language. In 1789, Jones published this landmark in the history of Indian studies

in the West for an admiring Europe. Within a decade of the appearance of Jones' *Shakuntala or the Fatal Ring*, other translations sprang up in German, French, Danish and Italian. *Shakuntala* became one of the most circulated Indian masterpieces—it was reprinted five times in England between 1790 and 1807 and it was re-translated and published many times throughout Europe.²² The German translation (from the Latin) by George Forster (1754- 94) of Kalidasa's *Abhijnana Shakuntala* in 1791 awakened 'in the highest degree the enthusiasm of men like Herder (who received it directly from Forster and wrote the preface to Forster's second edition) and Goethe'.²³ Goethe's legendary fascination with it²⁴ probably established *Shakuntala's* reputation in the West.

In the following century, Jones' translation of *Abhijnana Shakuntala* appeared in forty-six translations in twelve different languages in Europe.²⁵ During the 1830s, the translations of Kalidasa's and Bhartrihari's dramas by Peter von Bohlen (1796-1840)²⁶ greatly assisted their popularity in Europe. *Shakuntala* was translated more than ten times, *Vikramorvashtya* five times (and produced as an opera in Munich in 1886), *Mricchakatika* ('The Little Clay Cart') four times (and staged in Western theatres) and *Dasha-kumara-charita* three times.²⁷ *Shakuntala* was adapted to the German theatre and the Parisian ballet and produced on the English stage in 1899, 1912 and 1913. The banal taste of theatregoers everywhere was elevated by the productions of *Shakuntala*—expressly for that reason, Alexander Tairov deliberately staged the play at Moscow's Kamerny Theatre in 1914.²⁸ In the critical period of the 1940s, writers such as Renū Guñon appealed to the masses to seek their way out of the world's moral crisis through Oriental sources of contemplation. The popular French stage inspired audiences with presentations of *Shakuntala* and *Mricchakatika*. The poet Rimbaud wrote that the French were inclined to continue returning 'to

the Orient and to the first and eternal wisdom'.²⁹

Jones translated Kalidasa's poem *Ritusamhara* in 1792 and published it in Calcutta as *The Seasons, A Descriptive Poem*. It was the first systematic edition of a text in Sanskrit characters.³⁰ His English translation of *Abhijnana Shakuntala*, together with his *Hymns to Narayana*, were studied with fond devotion by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), Robert Southey (1774-1843), Thomas Moore (1779-1857), Alfred Tennyson (1850-1892) and other nineteenth-century English poets.³¹

The Great Impact of Sir Charles Wilkins' Translation of the *Bhagavadgita*

Sir Charles Wilkins was the first employee of the East India Company to learn the Sanskrit language.³² He initiated the new discipline of Sanskrit scholarship thanks to a request from Hastings³³ that he study with Indian pundits at Benares (Varanasi), the traditional seat of Sanskrit learning. Hastings had prepared the *Vipadarnava Setu* (*A Code of Gentoo Laws*) with the help of these pundits³⁴ and published it in London in 1776. Louis Matthieu Langlès, the curator of oriental manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale and its provisional specialist on India, added further details in the preface to *Recherches Asiatiques*:

It was in response to a direct summons from Hastings that the Brahmans versed in the Shastras ... came to Calcutta from all parts of India. Gathering at Fort William and supplied with the most authentic texts, they drafted a comprehensive treatise on Indic law in the Hindu language. This was subsequently translated into Persian, and into English by Halhed under the title *Code of Gentoo Laws*. It was also under Hastings' auspices that Charles Wilkins studied Sanskrit and had the distinction of publishing the first translation in a European language based directly on a Sanskrit text.³⁵

Wilkins' *Bhagavadgita* (*Bhagavat-Geeta*, or *Dialogues of Kreeshma and Arjoon*) was first translated from Sanskrit into English under the auspices of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta

in November 1784 and later published in London in 1785. (51) It had a great impact on Europe. In his study of the rediscovery of India and the East in Europe, Raymond Schwab wrote in the *Oriental Renaissance* that 'no text could, by its profound metaphysics and by the prestige of its poetic casting, more irresistibly shake the hold of the tradition of a superior race.' (161) In 1795, Langles mentioned Wilkins in an article in the *Magasin Encyclopédique* on the literary works of the English in India:

A single man is carrying out an undertaking that usually requires the collaboration of a large number of artists. His first attempts are typographical masterpieces. This truly amazing man, whose name merits a distinguished place in the list of benefactors of letters, is Charles Wilkins, a scholar deeply versed in Sanskrit and known in Europe for two works [*Bhagavat-Geeta* and *Heetopades of Veeshnoo-Sharma*] he has translated from the sacred language of the Brahmins. (55)

A short span of ten years had passed from the publication of Wilkins' *Bhagavat-Geeta* to the appearance of Langles' article in the *Magasin Encyclopédique*. The brilliant translations of Sanskrit books from the Asiatic Society, encouraged by Jones, were well known in revolutionary France, despite the decrease in communication owing to dramatic historical events. Langles continued to document Indic research and was well aware of the importance of the Society, which was dedicated to Oriental research and scholarship. He included a history and bibliography of the early publications of the Society in the third volume of the *Magasin Encyclopédique*. (55)

In 1787, Abbū Parraud retranslated Wilkins' English version of the *Bhagavadgita* into French. In 1832, a French translation made directly from Sanskrit by Jean-Denis Lanjuinais was published posthumously. Lanjuinais had written what a 'great surprise' it was 'to find among these fragments of an extremely ancient epic poem from India ... a completely spiritual pantheism ... and ... the vision of all-in-God.'³⁶

Illness forced Wilkins to return to England in 1786 after sixteen years in India. He later fitted Devanagari characters to a printing press in Bath, England. From this press, he printed his translation of the *Hitopadesha* in 1787 and his *Story of Shakuntala from the Mahabharata* in 1793. Wilkins had collected a large number of manuscripts from India. His stature as a leading Indologist established these manuscripts as the core collection of the famous India Office Library, which was in his charge. After a fire consumed his press, his *Grammar of the Sanskrit Language* was printed from London in 1808. In 1815, he published the *Radicals of the Sanskrit Language*, containing the verb roots of Sanskrit, in London. Students of Sanskrit welcomed the two grammars and valued his memorable research papers for the Asiatic Society.³⁷

By the late eighteenth century, French writers had acquired intimate knowledge of Indian literature. Jean-Jacques Ampère predicted that Indian thought would introduce another Renaissance in his own time.³⁸ The translation of Kalidasa's *Abhijnana Shakuntala* had captivated many writers of significance. François Renū Chateaubriand (1768-1848), foremost among these, had the additional benefit of Jones' translations of Sanskrit works. Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869) also wrote reliably about the original Hindu epics along with his translations of Indian poetry and drama.

(To be continued)

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Unless You Let It In

All the water in the world
 However hard it tried
 Could never, never sink a ship
 Unless it got inside.

All the evil in the world
 The wickedness and sin
 Can never sink your soul's fair craft
 Unless you let it in.

All the hardships of this world
 Might wear you pretty thin
 But they won't hurt you one least bit ...
 Unless you let them in.

—from cyberspace

Greed

N HARIHARAN

A guilty conscience is a mental drag, a psychic liability. But it seems to have one great merit: it is also an infallible teacher. It has an uncanny knack of picking up the right message from a vague clue, an oblique hint or even a monosyllabic utterance. This is amply illustrated by an Upanishadic story. The celestials, humans and demons once betake themselves to Prajapati for spiritual instruction. To the celestials, who go to him first, Prajapati imparts his cryptic instruction in a single syllable, *da*. To the humans, who approach him next, Prajapati repeats the same monosyllable as his special teaching. The demons also get their message encapsulated in the mysterious syllable. All of them return to their abodes immensely satisfied with the profound instruction given to them.

One Teaching, Three Effects

What is the message that the three distil from the enigmatic instruction? The celestials revel endlessly in sense pleasures, of which there is no dearth in heaven. Their indulgence is so unrestrained that they hear their pricking conscience expostulating against their excesses. It makes them interpret the syllable to mean *dama*, or sense-control, and they conclude that Prajapati was enjoining them to control their senses. The demons are notorious for their extreme cruelty, bereft of even a trace of pity. Deep inside they feel their gnawing conscience reproving them for their ruthlessness. It causes them to construe the syllable as indicative of *dayā*, or compassion, and they think Prajapati was counselling a modicum of mercy in their dealings with others. Humans are known for their greed. They love to acquire and amass things, rather irrationally. The 'still, small voice within' keeps admonish-

ing them for their ugly avarice. Naturally, they understand the teaching to be *dāna*, or charity, and they deduce that Prajapati was recommending to them the virtue of generosity.

An Age-old Malady

Sometimes the passion of human beings to acquire and hoard seems really pathological. The Hindu epics describe to what extremities of wickedness they can go to mulct fellow human beings and aggrandize themselves. This acquisitive trait of the human psyche shows an unbroken continuity through the ages. History is replete with sordid episodes that would not have sullied its pages but for man's acquisitive passion. If any, the madness has only escalated with the passage of time, for today the lunacy has acquired gargantuan proportions. The acquisitive craze of the modern age is all-consuming and all-pervasive. The poor work overtime and demean themselves, yet walk into the debt-trap trying to earn a few more coins. The middle class seems to have only one motto: 'Accumulate by hook or by crook.' As for the rich, nothing is wrong if it can help them line their already bursting wallets. Alas, the steamroller of acquisition seems able to flatten anything—ethics, morals, values!

The Root of Greed

How to explain this stranglehold of greed on the human mind? A close look at the anatomy of greed (*lobha*) will help us unravel the mystery. Basically, greed is of the stuff of desire (*kāma*); it is only a variant of desire, which, as Sri Krishna shows in the *Bhagavadgita*, is born of *rajas* (*rajo-guṇa-samudbhavaḥ*).¹ If desire is the ravenous (*mahāśanaḥ*) and sinful (*mahāpāpmā*) river, greed is its insidious and

obnoxious tributary. In Sri Ramakrishna's teachings, greed is the wicked sibling of vulgar lust; together they form the notorious duo *kāminī-kāñcana*.

What Causes Greed?

Now, what is the *raison d'être* of greed? Four reasons make people greedy. First, wealth is amassed not for its own sake but for the immense purchasing power it represents. The more one earns and hoards, the greater is one's command over creature comforts. Thus, it is the lure of sense enjoyment that feeds and sustains the love of lucre. This is what makes the treasure hunt such exciting fun. Second, money is believed to provide economic security in times of uncertainty or distress. A man is only wise in proportion to his ability in piling up money, because that is his best insurance against future contingencies. So niggardliness is a virtue. Third, riches are meant not only to ensure one's own prestige and social status; they become necessary when one is concerned for the safety and well-being of one's dependants (and descendants). Often greed is a good index of a man's attachment to his kinsmen. As long as he is attached to his relatives and friends he cannot extricate himself from the rat race. Last, there is an odd set of people who regard money not just as a means of procuring creature comforts but as the be-all and end-all of life; they run after it for its own sake. To these money-mad people, miserliness is next to godliness—only Mammon is their god, whom they worship in bank vaults.

Redemption from Greed

Religion is unsparing in its denunciation of greed. Avarice obstructs spiritual growth as it is an offspring of the three gunas. Redemption consists in the individual self's transcendence of the gunas, its eschewal of the sense of duality, its release from the fetters of the impulse to acquire and preserve, its anchorage in purity and its peaceful abidance in the Self.

This is what Sri Krishna means when he says, 'The Vedas deal with the three gunas. O Arjuna, be free from these three gunas, from the pairs of opposites. Be established in *sattva*; do not try to acquire what you lack or preserve what you have. Be established in the Atman.' (2.45) The term *niryogakṣema* in the verse, in effect, signifies the antithesis of greed. It implies the virtues of contentment (*tr̥pti*) and non-acceptance of gifts (*aparigraha*), which are prerequisites to spiritual progress.

Dispassion the Remedy

How, then, do we go about the Herculean task of banishing greed from our lives? It is a well-known axiom that to get rid of the effect we have to eliminate the cause. We have already seen that craving for sense pleasure is the breeding-ground of cupidity. So it follows that if we shun such base delights, then we will no longer be plagued by the malady of greed. In other words, dispassion (*vairāgya*) is the surest weapon to kill greed. And the best way to develop a dispassionate attitude is to always keep in mind the seamy side of sense enjoyments. Sri Krishna warns that, for all their promise of pleasure, the senses are highly inconstant and eventually make for pain. (5.22) He also points out how they lose their subtle and treacherous appeal as one advances on the spiritual path and fade away completely when the Truth is seen. (2.59)

Sri Ramakrishna's wise sayings on this theme are a telling commentary on this verse: 'He who has once tasted the refined crystal of sugar candy finds no pleasure in tasting the dirty treacle. He who has slept in a palace will not find pleasure in lying down in a dirty hovel. The soul that has tasted the sweetness of divine bliss finds no happiness in the vulgar pleasures of the world.'² So the conquest of greed demands of us an assiduous cultivation of dispassion, which unfolds and grows as we progress in our spiritual pilgrimage.

As for people who save for reasons of economic security, they are above reproach.

But the problem arises from the fact that most of them are just inveterate lovers of the yellow metal masquerading as savers for the rainy season. The line of demarcation between concern for economic security and plain love of money is rather thin. What begins as a genuine concern imperceptibly grows into an insatiable thirst for wealth. Such is the subtle way in which *kāñcana* overpowers the unsuspecting. But rare souls who yearn for spiritual awakening successfully ward off its sinister attacks as their entire focus is on spiritual emancipation. Even while in dire straits, Swami Vivekananda could not ask Mother Kali for wealth; on the other hand, he involuntarily prayed for *jñana*, *bhakti* and *vairāgya*. The best way for ordinary people to avoid the seductions of *kāñcana* is to cultivate the virtue of *aparigraha*, non-acceptance of anything that is not absolutely essential, and to unreservedly surrender to God's loving care and infinite mercy. But this kind of complete surrender is not possible without unflinching faith in God.

Those who hoard because of attachment to their relatives are deluded victims of ignorance. Like Arjuna, they too are infatuated with love for their kith and kin. Swayed by the impulses of attachment and aversion, they too refuse to face and fight the demon of attachment, desire and greed—all for their kinsmen's sake. However, their blinding attachment too can be rent asunder by inculcating in them a spiritual view of life; a thorough exposure to chastening spiritual truths can make them see the danger of yielding to attachment and getting themselves caught in its snares.

The Seven Jars of Gold

But the worshippers of Mammon are an incorrigible lot: they need no reason to hoard! Like the proverbial dog in the manger, they neither enjoy their wealth nor let others enjoy it. That greed is the greatest saboteur of mental peace, is beyond their understanding. We come across the prototype of this category in one of Sri Ramakrishna's parables:

A barber, who was passing under a haunted tree, heard a voice say, 'Will you accept seven jars full of gold?' The barber looked around, but could see no one. The offer of seven jars of gold, however, roused his cupidity and he cried aloud, 'Yes, I shall accept the seven jars.' At once came the reply, 'Go home, I have carried the jars to your house.' The barber ran home ... and saw the jars before him. He opened them and found them all full of gold, except the last one, which was only half-full. A strong desire now arose in the mind of the barber to fill the seventh jar also; for without it his happiness was incomplete. He therefore converted all his ornaments into gold coins and put them into the jar; but the mysterious vessel was as before, unfilled. This exasperated the barber. Starving himself and his family, he saved some more amount and tried to fill the jar; but the jar remained as before. So one day he humbly requested the king to increase his pay ... [and] the king doubled his pay. All this pay he saved and put into the jar, but the greedy jar showed no signs of filling. At last he began to live by begging from door to door, and his professional income and the income from begging all went into the insatiable cavity of the mysterious jar. Months passed, and the condition of the miserable and miserly barber grew worse every day. Seeing his sad plight, the king asked him one day, 'Hallo! When your pay was half of what you now get, you were happy, cheerful and contented; but with double that pay, I see you morose, care-worn and dejected. What is the matter with you? Have you got "the seven jars"? The barber was taken aback by this question and replied, 'Your Majesty, who has informed you of this?' The king said, 'Don't you know that these are the signs of the person to whom the Yaksha consigns the seven jars? He offered me also the same jars, but I asked him whether this money might be spent or was merely to be hoarded. No sooner had I asked this question than the Yaksha ran away without any reply. Don't you know that no one can spend that money? It only brings with it the desire of hoarding. Go at once and return the money.' The barber ... went to the haunted tree and said, 'Take back your gold, O Yaksha.' The Yaksha replied, 'All right.' When the barber returned home, he found that the seven jars had vanished ... and with it also had vanished his life-long savings.

The belly of greed is indeed cavernous, its appetite unappeasable. Well has the poet sung, 'O Greed, mountains of gold and silver have been thrown again and again into your stomach to fill it up, yet it remains flat as ever.'⁴

Refuge in the Spirit the Only Weapon against Greed

The very thought of gold exhilarates those whose spiritual sensibilities are dulled by sense gratification, while its mere touch used to cause excruciating pain to the saint of Dakshineswar. That is because the closer one is to the Spirit, the more one is repelled by Mammon's allurements; and the closer one is to the flesh, the more susceptible one becomes to evil influences. So the secret of slaying the demon of greed is to eschew matter and seek exclusive sanctuary in the Spirit.

Is greed, then, man's sole weakness? Is he a paragon of virtue otherwise? A human being is, in fact, a curious blend of god, man and demon; his complex personality is a strange tenement in which all three elements coexist. When man abandons himself to sense pleasure, he exhibits the deva dimension of his personality; when he is cruel, sadistic and injurious, he projects his asura dimension; and when avaricious and covetous, he merely displays his human aspect. So Prajapati's pithy message is in fact addressed to man's three-dimensional personality. Swami Satprakashananda's comments on this subject are quite instructive:

The three moral ideals of self-control, charity, and compassion are intended for three different grades of men. The cruel should practise non-injury and strive to be compassionate; the avaricious should overcome greediness by charity; and those who are free from other vices but still have sense-desires, should particularly practise inner control. In this context Śaṅkara remarks: 'Those among men who, though lacking in self-control, are possessed of other good qualities are the gods; those in whom greed prevails

are men; while those who are cruel and violent are the demons (asuras, lit., the ungodly). So the same human species, according to the three drawbacks—lack of self-control, greediness, and cruelty, and according to the prevalence in them of the three guṇas—sattva, rajas, and tamas—are entitled gods, men, and demons. Therefore, it is men who should learn all the three lessons.'⁵

* * *

Greed is indeed difficult to get rid of. While age blunts the keenness of man's faculties, physical, mental and intellectual, it is powerless over greed. A Sanskrit verse humorously points out Lady Greed's firm loyalty to her man even in decrepitude: 'Teeth fallen, hair grey, sight obstructed, each step faltering, body requiring artificial support—although I am afflicted with many infirmities, that good lady, craving, never deserts me.'⁶

Only with the help of divine grace can we vanquish greed. It was this divine intervention that transformed the miserly Srinivasa Nayaka, who in one defining moment of spiritual awakening renounced all his riches as worthless trinkets into the great saint Purandaradasa. Let us pray for God's help to defeat this demon of greed! *

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Happiness is belonging, not belongings. —Elizabeth Harvey

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras—An Exposition

SWAMI PREMESHANANDA

(Translated by Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee)

Chapter 3 (continued)

48. *Grahaṇa-svarūpāsmitānvayārthavattva-saṁyamād-indriyajayaḥ.*

By making *saṁyama* on the objectivity of the organs [that is, the transformations they undergo in perceiving an object], on their power of illumination, on egoism, on the inherence of the *gunas* in them, and on their contributing to the experience of the soul, comes the conquest of the organs.

49. *Tato mano-javitvaṁ vikaraṇa-bhāvaḥ pradhāna-jayaśca.*

From that [conquest of the organs] comes to the body the power of moving as swiftly as the mind, the power of [using] the organs independently of the body, and the conquest of nature.

Comment: By concentrating on the organs, the yogi gains complete mastery over them. As a result, the yogi can go anywhere by merely wishing it. He can also have the experience of sense objects like sights and tastes without making use of the respective organs.

In short, it is as if nature in her entirety becomes like his maid-servant and obeys his commands. Nature moves the way the yogi makes her move. By attaining perfection in this practice, the yogi becomes all-powerful.

50. *Sattva-puruṣānyathākhyāti-mātrasya sarva-bhāvādhiṣṭhātṛtvaṁ sarva-jñātṛtvañ-ca.*

By making *saṁyama* on the discrimination between the *sattva* [compare 3.36] and the *Puruṣa*, come omnipotence and omniscience.

Comment: When the yogi thus attains the above-mentioned state, he is able to know distinctly that his real Self and *Prakriti*, the field

of his play, are entities of two different types. He then becomes omniscient and omnipotent.

51. *Tad-vairāgyād-āpi doṣa-bīja-kṣaye kaivalyam.*

By giving up even these powers, comes the destruction of the very seed of evil, which leads to *kaivalya* [isolation or freedom].

Comment: After he reaches the state of omniscience, the yogi has to totally renounce the desire to play with nature. Then only can

he attain *kaivalya*, the state of endless bliss and peace. Then no longer can nature dominate him.

52. *Sthāny-upa-nimantraṇe saṅgasmayākaraṇaṁ punar-anīṣṭaprasaṅgāt.*

The yogi should not feel allured or flattered [seized by *saṅga* (attachment) or *smaya* (thrill)] by the overtures of celestial beings [*sthānis*] for fear of evil again.¹

Comment: When a yogi becomes fully eligible for the attainment of *kaivalya*, various ce-

lestial beings having ethereal bodies may tempt him with objects of enjoyment to fore-

close his way to final liberation (nirvana). We hear that such incidents occurred in the lives of divine incarnations like Buddha, Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna. Under these circumstances those who, like Buddha, Jesus

Christ and Sri Ramakrishna, can remain steady in their own chosen goals, realize within a short time final identification with Brahman (Brahma-nirvana).

53. *Kṣaṇa-tat-kramayoḥ saṁnyamād-vivekajam jñānam.*

By making *saṁnyama* on a particle of time and its precession and succession [the time preceding and following it] comes discrimination [enabling one to know the good from the evil and thus to avoid things like the devas, heavens and powers].

54. *Jāti-lakṣaṇa-deśair-anyatā'navacchedāt-tulyayos-tataḥ pratipattiḥ.*

Those things which cannot be differentiated by species, sign, and place—even they will be discriminated by the above *saṁnyama*. [Thus a yogi is able to see that all things, mental and physical, are compounds and as such cannot be the pure and perfect Purusha, who is the only simple entity in this universe.]

55. *Tārakam sarva-viśayam sarvathā-viśayam-akramañceti vivekajam jñānam.*

The saving [*tāraka*, because it takes the yogi across the ocean of birth and death] knowledge is that knowledge of discrimination which simultaneously covers all objects, in all their variations [there being no succession in perception by this knowledge].

Comment: The way to realization of one's true Self is discrimination between the Self and the non-Self. One other means of attaining that discrimination is to concentrate the mind on the minutest instant of time. Suppose a thousand lotus leaves are pierced by a needle in a single stroke and the moment of piercing is divided into a thousand parts. If one can perceive such a minute part of time in deep samadhi, one can know everything about na-

ture, transformation and so on—all objects of the world. As such, there remains nothing unknown about nature to such a yogi.

As the attainment of this knowledge saves one from worldly bondage, it is known as 'saving knowledge' (*tāraka-jñāna*). When this is attained, the yogi does not have to exert himself in any way to know anything in the infinite universe. Just by a wish he is able to know simultaneously all things relating to creation.

56. *Sattva-puruṣayoḥ śuddhi-sāmye kaivalyam-iti.*

By [achieving] the similarity of purity between the sattva and the Purusha [that is, by making the sattva or intellect, which is ordinarily a mixture of purity and impurity, as pure as the Purusha itself] comes *kaivalya*.

Comment: When discrimination becomes fully manifest, there does not remain even a trace of desire in buddhi. Then buddhi becomes so pure that no distinction can be felt between it and one's real Self. At that time

there no longer remains any need of buddhi and therefore it disappears; the yogi remains conscious of only his own real Self. This is the realization of *kaivalya*.

Chapter 4: The Section on Independence (*Kaivalya-pāda*)

It is very difficult for human beings to comprehend the idea of *kaivalya*, or full libera-

tion. Usually among those Hindus who lead a more or less virtuous life, a few speak of liber-

ation. But a little talk with them makes it clear that their idea of liberation is to live in a happy place where they can become free from the sufferings they have undergone in life. A very strong characteristic of the human mind is the desire for happiness. Their desire is to go to a place where they can stay in happiness. That is why members of various religious sects hold in their minds strange conceptions of various kinds about the next world or heaven. As such a man's ideal of life is determined by his idea of happiness or, in other words, by his conception of how much happiness he can manage to acquire for himself.

Judged in terms of their idea of the next world, devout people can be roughly classified into three different types. At the first level, we have persons who think that performance of good deeds as prescribed in one's religion results in one's getting into heaven. Again, no two persons can have the same concept of heaven. This is because the diversity of people knows no end. The devotees at the second level imagine that after death they would stay in the company of God. This kind of imagination also is endless in its variety. A devotee of Rama aspires to go after death to an Ayodhya permeated by the supreme Spirit. A devotee of Krishna hopes to go to an eternal Vrindaban, again so permeated. Devotees of Narayana imagine that like human beings their Chosen Deity leads the life of a householder with Mother Lakshmi in an exceedingly lovely place called Vaikuntha. There are arrangements for cooking food there and the devotees partake of it in the form of Narayana's prasada. Sri Ramakrishna used to call a certain woman devotee as 'the cook of Vaikuntha'. Devotees at the third level are jnanis; they are not concerned with things that can be seen or heard. Such a devotee remains so engrossed with one entity, his own Self, that he does not have the least bit of want or feel the need for anything. This state is called *nirvāṇa*. *Vāṇa* means 'body'. The word nirvana stands for a state where one does not have [in one's

consciousness] any kind of body, whether gross (*sthūla*), subtle (*sūkṣma*) or causal (*kāraṇa*).

In all countries and at all times, the idea of heaven is something which comes naturally to the human mind. But very few people know that heaven is a place where one can enjoy the bliss of God. In the *Bhagavadgita* it is said that rarely someone among thousands of people engages his mind in spiritual practice and rarely someone among thousands of such spiritual aspirants attains full knowledge.² The ancient sages did not deem it necessary to preach about knowledge to the general public. For unless the embodied soul (jivatman) has finished with experiencing the world, it does not in any way want to attain liberation. An aspirant who is not yet through with the phase of experiencing the world but has in a general way a liking for liberation is to some extent endowed with sattva guna. But if he shuns all kinds of work so as to avoid exertion and feigns as if he is absorbed in reflecting on Brahman, even such an aspirant becomes possessed by tamas. An aspirant who is endowed with rajas performs various kinds of severe observances with a view to earning name and fame and as a result becomes fallen. And an aspirant possessed of tamas neglects his duties in the name of striving for liberation and debases himself. Even though such aspirants do not meet with utter downfall, since they have taken to the path of enjoyment, they spoil whatever chance they would have had of attaining knowledge.

The doctrine of nirvana was preached to humanity for the first time by Buddha, an incarnation of God, at a time when a critical social situation was obtaining in India. Swamiji has spoken with much enthusiasm about the greatness of Buddha at many places. At the same time he has clearly mentioned the harm that befell humanity on account of the preaching of Buddha's religion. The fact of the matter is this: 'All undertakings are covered by defect, as fire by smoke.'³

In India, after carrying out investigations into the nature of man for a long time, the sages came to know That, knowing which nothing else remains to be known. They divided human beings into four classes according to the four *āśramas* (stages of life) to which they belong and made provisions for the attainment of prosperity (*abhyudaya*) starting from enjoyment, and then, the final beatitude (*nīḥśreyasa*) starting from prosperity. For those desirous of attaining the final beatitude, they discovered an infallible way for reaching perfection by proceeding scientifically. And it is with a view to showing that way that Maharshi Patanjali composed the *Yoga Sutras*. This is a very dependable text about spiritual practice. It is not a text dealing with theoretical matters; in it Maharshi Patanjali shows only the practical aspect of spiritual discipline. He expounds in an excellent way how one can organize the body, mind and intellect suitably to transform one's spiritual striving into something practical. The *Yoga Sutras* clearly describes the experiences the mind goes through as it rises from the subtle to subtler levels. In it Maharshi Patanjali authoritatively shows (1) how a person's individual powers can go on increasing until he comes to know all the secrets of creation, and also (2) how an individual can identify himself with all the powers of the universe so as to become omniscient and omnipotent. Finally he shows how immensely greater the knower is compared to all kinds of knowable objects and establishes that the ultimate limit of spiritual striving is the attainment of the status of this knower. Here it needs to be understood that 'the status of knower' means the knowledge of one's real Self.

According to Vedanta, the unqualified Brahman divides Itself manifold by means of Its inscrutable power and assumes various forms to become this creation. And every living being in this creation forgets its own Self as

it roams around and sees the universe. Among the infinite multitude of living beings a few evolve to become aspirants of Self-knowledge. If they adopt and pursue the Yoga discipline, they can attain perfection and thus realize Brahman in all Its aspects, both with and without attributes.

(To be continued)

Notes and References (by Editor, Udbodhan)

1. It is of utmost importance that the yogi should remain alert until he reaches full perfection. He should not feel tempted, exhilarated or surprised by perceiving the astounding powers resulting from yoga. All such feelings are obstacles in the path to perfection, liberation or attainment of *kaivalya*. These lead to the yogi's downfall. In the Puranic literature we find many stories of great sages being tempted before the attainment of perfection. Those stories describe how the yogis fell while at the doorstep of perfection. The main purport of these stories is this: at no instant should a yogi, or spiritual aspirant, regard his condition as secure or impregnable; there remains the possibility of a fall even just prior to reaching perfection. Complacency is extremely harmful in spiritual life.
2. *Bhagavadgita*, 7.3. Sri Krishna says this to Arjuna while explaining to him that one rarely finds a person who is qualified to attain the knowledge of Brahman and it is extremely difficult to attain such knowledge. Swami Premeshanandaji here tries to clarify the idea of attainment of *kaivalya* as described in Yoga shashtra by referring to the *Gita*. Through this reference he also hints subtly at the close relation between Vedanta and Yoga.
3. *Gita*, 18.48. By quoting this part of a saying of Sri Krishna from the *Gita*, Swami Premeshanandaji implies that when Swamiji criticized Buddha, it was not a criticism of Buddha himself, but of the shortcoming which remains naturally associated with every kind of work.

The kindest word in all the world is the unkind word—unsaid.

Kuṇḍika Upaniṣad

TRANSLATED BY SWAMI ATMAPRIYANANDA

The expression of an ascetic monk's spiritual experiences (*continued*)

नारायणोऽहं नरकान्तकोऽहं पुरान्तकोऽहं पुरुषोऽहमीश्वरः ।

अखण्डबोधोऽहमशेषसाक्षी निरीश्वरोऽहं निरहं च निर्ममः ॥२३॥

23. I am Nārāyaṇa. I am the destroyer of the [demon] Naraka. I am [Śiva], the destroyer of the [three] cities [of the demon Tripura]. I am the Puruṣa, the [supreme] Lord. I am the indivisible Awareness (Consciousness). I am infinite, the [eternal] Witness. I am [the One-without-a-second and therefore there is] no superior ruler [to Me]. I am devoid of the sense of 'I' and 'mine'.¹

Realization of Brahman through the practice of *yoga*

योगाभ्यासेन ब्रह्मसाक्षात्कारः

तदभ्यासेन प्राणापानौ संयम्य ।

वृषणापानयोर्मध्ये पाणी आस्थाय संश्रयेत् ।

संदश्य शनकैर्जिह्वां यवमात्रविनिर्गताम् ॥२४॥

माषमात्रीं तथा दृष्टिं श्रोत्रे स्थाप्य तथा भुवि ।

श्रवणे नासिके गन्धायतत्त्वं न च संश्रयेत् ॥२५॥

24, 25. By the practice of that [*yoga*],² [the ascetic monk], having controlled [the vital energies, namely] *prāṇa* and *apāna*, shall rest [quietly] placing [that is pressing] the perineum with both the hands; gently biting the tongue stuck out [of the mouth] to the extent of a grain of barley, [and] similarly directing the eyesight [open just] to the extent of a black-gram seed towards the *ākāśa* (space) of the ear [and the feet firmly resting] on the ground, he [that is, the ascetic monk] shall not [allow his] ears to resort to [sound] or his nose to resort to [smell].³ [The union of *prāṇa* and *apāna* is accomplished by this process].

अथ शैवं पदं यत्र तद्ब्रह्म ब्रह्म तत्परम् ।

तदभ्यासेन लभ्येत पूर्वजन्मार्जितात्मना ॥२६॥

26. Thereafter, [there is merging or dissolution into that] which is the seat of Śiva,⁴ that is Brahman; that [verily] is the Supreme [transcendent] Brahman.⁵ That should be attained by [the] practice [of *yoga*] acquired in previous births as [the nature of] the Self (*ātma-svarūpa*).⁶

Gradual liberation in the case of Knowers of Brahman with attributes

सविशेषज्ञानिनः क्रममुक्तिः

संभूतैर्वायुसंश्राव्य हृदयं तप उच्यते ।

ऊर्ध्वं प्रपद्यते देहाद्भित्त्वा मूर्धानमव्ययम् ॥२७॥

27. By the external and internal organs [and along with them] the effulgence [that shines

forth with the fire of the knowledge of Brahman with attributes], [entering] the heart [and there] listening to (that is, clearly perceiving) [the *prāṇa-vāyu*, the vital air, as capable of piercing the *brahma-randhra*, the top of the head, taking recourse to that *prāṇa* to traverse along the *suṣumṇā*] and piercing through the head beyond the body, [the ascetic monk, the *yogī*] attains [verily to that] immutable (indestructible) [Brahman].⁷

(To be continued)

Notes

1. This is a spontaneous outpouring of the sage who has had the experience of cosmic identity—identity with all the gods and identity with the supreme Ruler of the universe (Parameśvara). When the individual little ego (which Swami Vivekananda calls the ‘puny ego’) vanishes, one realizes one’s cosmic dimension and gets merged in one’s infinite, indivisible nature as Being-Awareness-Bliss Absolute (*akhaṇḍa sat-cit-ānanda-svarūpa*). This is the summum bonum of all spiritual realization.
2. The *yogic* technique mentioned here is rather sketchy, needing an elaboration. Upaniṣad Brahmayogin has done this elaboration with remarkable clarity in his commentary. He says that in case the Brahman-Knowledge described in the above-stated verses does not arise in a monk’s heart by the Vedantic method, he could then take recourse to the *yogic* technique of (i) achieving first a union of the vital airs of *prāṇa* and *apāna*, (ii) making it six-faced, (iii) then arousing the *kuṇḍalīnī* power at the base of the spine (*mūlādhāra*), (iv) piercing through it the six centres forming the three knots (*granthis*), and (v) ultimately coming face to face with Brahman (*brahma-sākṣātkāra*) at the *sahasrāra* (conceived of as a thousand-petalled lotus) in the head. Thus, the main thrust of the *mantras* herein describing the *yogic* technique is to instruct the aspirant (ascetic monk) to pierce the *suṣumṇā* canal by the *kuṇḍalīnī* through the control of the vital airs of *prāṇa* and *apāna*.
3. By *upalakṣaṇā* (suggestive implication), the nose and the ear mean all the five senses of knowledge and their corresponding objects. The idea is that the five senses of knowledge (*jñānendriyas*) should not find their corresponding sense objects for their abode. In other words, the senses and their objects should get delinked; nor should the mind get coupled to any of these through will or desire. By this process, the union of *prāṇa* and *apāna* becomes possible.
4. Thereafter, the *kuṇḍalīnī* power pierces through the *suṣumṇā* canal and then entering the *sahasrāra cak- ra*, gets merged therein. Along with the *kuṇḍalīnī*, the vision (sight), mind, *prāṇa* as well as the (inner) fire merge (or get dissolved) into verily That wherein shines the abode of Śiva.
5. Brahman indeed is the Substratum of such dissolution. This concept of Substratum being dependent on the idea of dissolution, when once this idea too goes away, That Itself is realized as the supreme, transcendental Brahman, attributeless and the other-less Truth (*niṣprati-yogika*).
6. The construction here appears rather elliptical. Upaniṣad Brahmayogin comments on this as follows: That which is called *jñāna-yoga* refers to the Self attained or the nature of the Self practised in the previous life. Through this practice, groups of *yogis* attain to the higher (*para*) or lower (*apara*) Brahman according to the nature of their contemplation (*bhāvanā*). Therein, a knower of Brahman without attributes (*nirviśeṣa-jñānī*) verily becomes Brahman simultaneously with his acquiring of Knowledge. The idea is that Knowledge does not stand in need of any further activity: Knowledge (*jñāna*) itself is Brahman-realization.
7. The construction in the original text needs to be largely supplemented by words and whole phrases/sentences to complete the meaning. These have been supplied here, following Upaniṣad Brahmayogin’s commentary.

Glimpses of Holy Lives

No Price Too High for God

Paranjyoti was the commander of the Palava king's army. His valour in vanquishing the enemies and his ability to lead an army of elephants, and, to cap it all, his integrity and long years of devoted service—had all won him the king's trust and admiration. The king had a special liking for him. He asked him one day, 'Paranjyoti, do you have any special liking?' 'Yes, your highness, I have been thinking of spending my life in service of Lord Shiva,' replied Paranjyoti. Though taken aback, the king reluctantly freed him of his responsibilities with due honour.

Service before Self

With the wealth granted by the king, Paranjyoti settled down in a spacious country house with a large cultivable land and more than a hundred heads of cattle. He thanked God for this calmer phase of his life, after years of service commanding the king's forces. His life was now devoted to the service of all. But sannyasins were special objects of his adoration; he looked upon them as embodiments of Shiva. No day would pass without his offering a sumptuous meal to at least one of them. Only then would he and his devoted wife have their meal. Considering Paranjyoti's service to others, people called him '*Perum tondar*, a great devotee'. He would disagree, saying that he was after all a humble servant (*Siruttondar*). Legend has it that, pleased with their hospitality, the child-saint Tirujnanasambandar sang in his hymns, 'Siruttondar is my friend.'

The couple's joy knew no bounds when they were blessed with a son. They named him *Sirāla*, 'the prosperous one'. The child grew in an atmosphere of devotion and was now five years old.

A Strange Guest ...

'*Shivo'ham*'. Hearing the resonant chant, the housemaid went towards the door. There stood a sannyasin with bright eyes, a luminous smile radiating from his face and sacred ash smeared all over his body. The maid fell at his feet. When she got up, the sannyasin asked, 'I have heard about Siruttondar and his hospitality to sannyasins. Is he in?'

'Welcome, O holy one, the master has just gone out. He shall return presently. Please be seated.'

'Who else is in the house?'

'I am the housemaid, and my master's wife is inside. Please come in; I shall call her.'

'I don't visit a house where women are alone,' the sannyasin stepped back.

Hearing the conversation, Siruttondar's wife came to the door. She offered her salutation at the sannyasin's feet and said humbly, 'Revered one, we don't eat without first entertaining a sannyasin. Since we didn't find any today, my husband has gone out looking for one. He'll be delighted to see you. Kindly sanctify our house by your presence. May we know about your whereabouts?'

'O noble woman,' said the sannyasin, 'I am from North India. I have come here to see your husband. Without the head of the family at home, I cannot enter this house. I shall be seated below the tree in the local Shiva temple. Please tell your husband when he is home. *Shivo'ham*.' And he left the place.

The wife continued to wait at the door. When her husband arrived she told him everything.

Siruttondar rushed to the Shiva temple, prostrated before the sannyasin and stood before him with folded hands. He said, 'I am unfit even to stand before holy ones like you, yet

out of love people call me a 'humble servant'. At our house we entertain a sannyyasin every day before having our meal. Unfortunately, we have not had a sannyyasin guest today so far. I had gone out looking for one. It's my good fortune that you visited our house. You should kindly have your food at our place.'

... and His Bizarre Food Habits

The sannyyasin said, 'Siruttondar, I am very pleased to meet you. In fact, I have come here just to meet you. Thanks for your invitation, but my food habits are a bit strange. You can't feed me according to my specifications.'

'By God's grace, I have no dearth of wealth, O holy one. Any special food can be arranged in a moment. It's a rare good fortune to have holy ones like you at our place. Should I be deprived of this rare opportunity?'

'My dear, I eat just once in six months and that, only non-vegetarian food. Today is such a day. Can you arrange to feed me?'

'That should be no problem; I have more than a hundred farm animals. Please come with me, revered one.'

'No, I didn't mean animal food. I eat human flesh; not of an adult, but of a five-year-old boy. Again, he should be free from bodily defects. And then ... oh, why all that? It's beyond you. Why should I hurt your feelings with more details?'

'Nothing is impossible for me, holy one. I can arrange your meal as you wish. Kindly tell me more.'

'The boy should be the only son of a family. His mother should hold him and the father should cut him; and then a curry made out of him. What?'

'Yes, holy one, most certainly it can be arranged.'

God and His before Everything

Siruttondar rushed home and briefed his wife about the special food requirement of the guest. Calmly she asked him, 'Where shall we get such a boy?'

'Who will give us such a boy, my dear? And is this a commodity to be had for a price? How can we deny the request of a sannyyasin who has been without food for six months? And without feeding him how do I eat? And if I don't eat, how will you eat? Bring our son, my dear!' She was silent.

Self-effacement in God

A word here before continuing the story. Siruttondar is adored as one of the sixty-three Tamil Shaiva saints called Nayanmars. The life of Nayanmars had just this one common feature: their wealth, body, mind and soul—everything was for their Shiva and his devotees; no calculation, no selfishness, no shop-keeping in their devotion, no thought of the morrow. God gives, God takes; ours is just to give and serve—that was their philosophy. Such an attitude formed the sheet anchor of their lives and dictated their actions. Almost all of them were householders, but stood out from others by their self-effacement and exemplary devotion to their Ideal. It is these traits that merit them adoration and worship in Shiva temples of the South.

The Ordeal

Siruttondar's was a devotion tempered with knowledge. But his wife? Did she also become one with her husband not only in body, but also in mind and spirit? She didn't protest. Siruttondar asked the maid to be ready with the cooking vessel, firewood and a hatchet. She trembled at the idea, but followed the instruction nevertheless. He carried his only son, who was smiling and joyously waving his hands. His wife followed him without a word. The father held the son's head and, as her child's anklets jingled, the mother held his feet. The boy thought it was some play. With folded hands Siruttondar prayed to his Lord Shiva: 'It was you who blessed us with this son; now it is you who want him back. Thy will be done!'

And the unthinkable happened: the hand that had won many battles for the Pallava king

now severed the child's head as Siruttondar brought the hatchet down on his son's neck! The mother turned the child's body for her husband to make pieces of it. Siruttondar handed the pieces of flesh to the maid and asked her to prepare a meal soon. He gave her the head separately, telling her that that wouldn't serve as food.

The maid was more than just a servant; she was a guardian of the entire household, and even looked upon her master and his wife as her own children. She was exceptionally resourceful and had the capacity to divine her master's thoughts and serve him accordingly. She cooked the head also separately, just in case.

Siruttondar invited the sannyyasin home. The couple washed and worshipped his feet. Siruttondar told him, 'The food is ready, holy one. Please be seated.' His wife spread a seat and a plantain leaf on the floor and served the special food on it.

The sannyyasin looked at Siruttondar and asked him, 'Did you follow my specifications scrupulously?'

'Yes, holy one, but we have discarded the head, thinking that that wouldn't be useful.'

'No, that too suits me all right.'

Siruttondar looked at the maid. She took out a vessel from the folds of her sari and looked at her master as if to say, 'I have cooked that too, thinking that the guest may ask for it.' Siruttondar folded his hands before her in gratitude.

Said the sannyyasin, 'I don't eat alone. Some devotee should eat with me.'

Another devotee? Siruttondar rushed out, but returned shortly, lines of worry on his face: 'Sorry, holy one, I couldn't find any.'

'So what? You too are a devotee. You can sit beside me.'

Another seat and leaf were spread beside the guest for Siruttondar. And the special food was served on his leaf.

The sannyyasin was silent. Siruttondar thought that perhaps the guest would start

eating only if he himself began to eat. When he was about to put a morsel of food in his mouth, the sannyyasin said, 'Are you so hungry, my dear? I eat just once in six months. Why should *you* be in such a hurry—you who eat every day? And is it right for you to begin eating before I do? Where is your son? Call him; he too should join us.'

'My son?'

'You have a son, don't you?'

'Yes, but ...'

'But what?'

'He won't be useful now.'

'I don't care. If I have to eat it won't be without your son. Call him soon. I don't want to hear anything more.'

The Grace

Siruttondar could not utter a word. He silently went towards the door and called out, 'Sirāla, my dear, please come. Our honoured guest is waiting for you.' The mother too followed him and called her son. With all eyes rivetted on the threshold, anklets jingled near the doorway and ... in walked their beaming darling son, as if back after school! Siruttondar and his wife were in tears and held him in their arms: 'Come dear, the holy one is waiting.'

When they turned back, there was no sannyyasin, no seats, no leaves, no curry—all had mysteriously vanished. Siruttondar was puzzled. He wondered at the cause of his guest's possible anger and sudden disappearance, and looked all around. A divine light appeared before him and his wife, congealing into the soothing, smiling form of Shiva with His consort Uma. Said Shiva to his transfixed devotees, 'I am pleased with your extraordinary devotion, My dear. Be with Me eternally! Father, mother and child—all of them at once became one with their Lord.'

The Lord beckoned to the housemaid too and said, 'You too have a place near us, my dear.' Her devoted service and cooking the special meal were enough to merit her the Lord's grace. *



Reviews

*For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA
publishers need to send two copies of their latest publications.*

Brahman: A Comparative Theology. Michael W Myers. Curzon Press, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 IBP, UK. 2001. xiii + 268 pp. Price not mentioned.

One occasionally comes across works on comparative philosophy or comparative religion, but works on comparative theology are rare. *Brahman: A Comparative Theology* by Michael Warren Myers, a comprehensive and competent study, is therefore especially welcome. It is a systematic theology from the comparative point of view. The learned author does not attempt to synthesize religious traditions. What he actually offers us is a critical study of systematic Christian theology in the light of the insights received from Indian and other traditions. He casts his net wide enough to include Chinese and Japanese viewpoints. There is no doubt whatsoever about the great academic value of the book.

Myers discusses all the important topics of theology, and his comparative approach freely brings in relevant Hindu, Buddhist and other Weltanschauungen. His method is a holistic one and he has recourse to a triangular world view which considers the religious ideal (God), humanity and the world. It is only natural that this holistic approach is flexible and there is ample scope for cross-cultural interaction.

The author is a sincere Christian but, at the same time, he has great interest in Indian religion and Indian culture. He must have been fascinated by the beautiful descriptions of Brahman in the Upanishads like the following one in the *Chandogya*: 'Brahman is supreme; He is self-luminous, He is beyond all thought. Subtler than the subtlest is He, farther than the farthest, nearer than the nearest. He resides in the heart of every being.' It is no wonder that he gives the title *Brahman* to his book. It has its basis in Christian life, thought and practice (he was brought up in a loving, liberal Protestant home) but it also reveals the catholicity of his outlook in his acceptance of religious pluralism and active seeking

of the wisdom traditions of the East.

The author begins with a discussion of the theological method. Gordon Kaufman's discussion of the method from his book *In Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology* is used as a foil for the position advanced in *Brahman*. It appears to Myers that holistic enquiry is superior to one- or two-dimensional strategies but he also believes that holistic strategy has to be tested. Then Myers takes up the terms of Kaufman's method—God, world and humanity—in cross-cultural conversation between India and the West.

Part 2 of the book begins with the topic of revelation. It is pointed out that a natural matter of contact between the West and India is the use of sacred texts. The Hindu and Christian 'vocabularies' of sacred text are gradually introduced. His central argument at this point is that devotion through a sacred text is a valid form of experience and a means for gaining knowledge of the reality behind the religious ideal. It is in this sense that these texts are sacred. The Veda is salvation-oriented, just as the Bible is salvation-centred, concludes the author. He examines the doctrines of God and Brahman, and compares the two.

Myers approvingly quotes a statement made by Martin Buber in *I and Thou*: 'God cannot be inferred in anything—in nature, say, as its author, or in history as its master, or in the subject as the self that is thought in it.' Myers, however, also points out the limits of inference in theology. Next are discussed *ṛta* as cosmic truth, order and morality and the doctrine of karma. The author argues that the world is a place where freedom and fulfilment can emerge. Yet, he admits at the same time that evil and suffering in the world are real. That is why theology needs theodicy, and Milton has to attempt to justify the ways of God to men in his *Paradise Lost*. Theodicy is fruitfully discussed cross-culturally, for karma lends the topic a distinctive set of solutions. It is argued that the world can be a vehicle for the transformation of evil into good. The ancient doctrine of *ṛta* is revisited in order to test its utility as world

principle in unison with the Vedic gods and goddesses. Myers is of the view that karma provides freedom as well as reason to the contemporary Indian Weltanschauung; it provides a general account of the landscape of theodicy but lacks a particular theory of evil.

The final chapter of the book is concerned with 'humanity'. It is an enquiry into religious ethics, Christology and eschatology. In the intellectual context, this means a critical consideration of the role of dharma in Hindu and Buddhist world views. Myers supports the argument that, in view of the religious ideal, the value of a human being is a 'given' rather than an 'achievement'. He argues that dharma must be understood in egalitarian terms.

The central part of the chapter is concerned with comparative Christology. (There is a very interesting chapter titled 'Kṛṣṇa and Christ'.) Here the relationship of humanity and Divinity is conceived respectively under the language of bodhisattva, avatara and Christ. Lastly, Myers examines human prospects in cross-cultural discussion of eschatology. He argues that freedom conceived as moksha (release, liberation) is a worthy and realistic human aspiration and thus may serve as a goal for cross-cultural theological enquiry. In this part of this review we have freely used Myer's own words, acting on the Indian idea of worshipping the Ganga with her own water. These are the concluding words of his Introduction: '*Mokṣa* becomes a fitting finale to a comparative theology which borrows insights from India. *Mokṣa* is regularly described as knowledge of Brahman in the Vedanta, and thus Brahman is both our title and our subject.'

Brahman is a very important contribution to theology and we must congratulate Michael Warren Myers for writing a book which is remarkable as much for its scholarship as for its clarity.

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Meditation and Its Practices: A Definitive Guide to Techniques and Traditions of Meditation in Yoga and Vedanta. *Swami Adiswarananda*. SkyLight Path Publishing, Route 4, PO Box 237, Woodstock, Vermont 05091, USA. www.skylightpaths.com. 2003. xvii + 472 pp. \$ 34.95.

Swami Adiswarananda, Minister and Spiritual Head of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York, makes a timely reminder of the sacred goal of human life through his book *Meditation and Its Practices*. A senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order serving in its New York centre for several decades, the swami has produced this monumental, lifetime work for the benefit of genuine spiritual seekers. Obviously the work is the result of painstaking research of several years. The book is absolutely orthodox and the author pursues the theme with a conviction, vigour and authenticity that deeply impress the readers.

Starting with the process of meditation, the author continues logically with the objective of meditation, centres of consciousness, methods of concentration and struggles in the path leading to final illumination. To support his views, the author quotes copiously from authoritative and ancient Hindu texts such as the Vedas, the Upanishads, the *Bhagavadgita*, the Patanjala *Yoga Sutras*, the Tantric texts, *Srimad Bhagavata*, the *Mahabharata* and the works of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda.

The author makes a scientific and rational approach to the subject and clarifies that meditation is a long-drawn process, which demands a strict ethical life on the part of the aspirant before attempting to ascend the higher steps. Even minute details about the physical condition, eating habits, exercises, posture, techniques of breathing and self-analysis are dealt with in great detail.

A word of warning is sounded against following unorthodox ways of attempting at quick results which may partly or completely shatter one's personality. Miraculous powers are also discouraged.

Exhaustive explanations are given on the meaning of the universal spiritual symbol Om, the Gayatri mantra, the four Vedic *mahavakyas* and the dif-

ferent japa mantras.

The author contends that continuous practice of meditation over a period of time must result in the transformation of a person's character, which is a sure sign of spiritual progress. He also lists the obstacles that are likely to occur during the practice and explains the methods to overcome them.

The author emphasizes the following four principles as underlying the purpose of meditation according to both the Yoga and the Vedanta schools: divinity of the individual soul, unity of existence, oneness of the ultimate Reality, and harmony of religions. The book is thus universal in its approach and can be used as a guide by persons of any faith with equally beneficial results.

In the present times, when there is a plethora of literature on yoga and meditation whose authenticity and sources are questionable, this book serves as an excellent reference and guide for genuine spiritual aspirants.

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Kailash Manasarovar. *Nilesh D Nathwani.*
New Age Books, A-44 Narina Phase 1,
New Delhi 110028. E-mail: nab@vsnl.in.
2002. xvi + 98 pp. Rs 195.

The name Kailash-Manasarovar is very much in the news of late. In spite of the physical hardships and the enormous cost of the pilgrimage, the number of pilgrims visiting this mystic mount and the magnificent lake nearby is growing year by year. Proportionately, books, guides, travelogues and the like written about this challenging pilgrimage are also on the increase.

This pilgrimage constitutes the darshan of Mount Kailash, Lake Manasarovar and the circumambulation of both. This pilgrimage is possible from April to September, the best time being mid-May to the end of June. The Government of India conducts this pilgrimage every year in groups. One must apply to the Ministry of External Affairs. However, for the past few years there have been many travel agents in Nepal who organize this pilgrimage. The expense is comparatively higher, but there is an advantage: one can select the group and the number of people and chart the programme according to one's own convenience.

The book under review is the record of experiences of the author during his pilgrimage to Kai-

lash-Manasarovar. With a group of 14 people, the author undertook this pilgrimage in April-May 2000 and chose to travel via Nepal. He jotted down his experiences for personal contemplation. Later facts and figures were added to bring out this book. The book 'is an engrossing, touching and remarkable account of a picturesque travel with nice imagery describing majestic mountains, turquoise lakes and virgin rivers of Tibet. Written in a brilliant style, it is a dramatic record that succeeds in imparting into the reader some of the intensely experienced emotions that will remain long in memory.' No doubt, this art-paper edition, elegantly brought out with big fonts and neat printing, is a feast to the reader.

The author's language is simple, but the narration powerful. He takes us through his experiences during the pilgrimage, enabling us to live in the domain of gods for the moment. Seeing the mighty Himalayan ranges, he exclaims, 'The immense impact it leaves on my mind tells me that this is the proof that a mighty power whom we call God exists. There is no need for an ontological argument to prove His existence.' (5) Seeing the condition of Tibet after the invasion and oppression by the Chinese, he says, 'Modernization and development are acceptable but not at the cost of an ancient heritage.' (8) Indeed, such remarks of the author add to the value of the book. Also, he provides the necessary information about the preparation, things to be carried and so on in an epilogue and a few appendices, to make the book a useful guide.

The narration is made more interesting and informative by outlining the historical importance of the places visited, along with the topographical facts regarding the journey. At the same time, the author is careful to warn the reader not to be carried away by the brighter side of the pilgrimage. There is another side with equally important factors for consideration. He decries the discomforts one has to face inside the tents; (20) the bumpy and painful rides in the Land Cruisers; (21-4) and the growing brothels and discotheques on the way, (27) to mention a few.

There are some interesting notes of the author which cannot be brushed aside as mere fancy. He wonders if the Shivalinga of Pashupatinath and Mount Kailash are not meteors. Otherwise how are these stones different from the other stones and have gained importance, he questions. Also, he explains that the triangle of Kailash, Gurla Mandhata

and Manasarovar brings a feeling of a mystic magnetic field latent under the ground. However, it is for geologists to ascertain the truth behind these assumptions.

The author should have taken more care in making certain statements. When he found that he could not complete the circumambulation due to bad weather he dismisses the circumambulation as 'irrational religious belief'. (52) This just reminds us of Aesop's 'sour grapes'. Is the circumambulation a mere belief for a devotee? No, much more: it is a rewarding spiritual practice for him.

'No words can describe what the eyes behold' (17)—true! But photos can be a rich substitute. Though the author has taken a number of photos, those printed are not many. When the whole book is printed on art paper, printing some more photos should not have posed any difficulty. We hope that this suggestion will be considered for a future edition.

Nevertheless, the book provides excellent reading. For one who intends to take up the pilgrimage, this book is a good guide and for one who has completed the pilgrimage this is an excellent invitation for contemplation.

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Narada Bhakti Sutram. Swami Harshananda. Sanskrit trans. Dr M E Rangacharya. Ramakrishna Math, Bangalore, Bull Temple Road, Bangalore 560 019. E-mail: rkmbblr_publi@vsnl.net. 2003. xxii + 146 pp. Rs 50.

Narada, the legendary saint, occupies a predominant position in Indian mythology and culture. Many texts are ascribed to him in different branches of science and arts. We have texts on law (*smṛiti*), architecture, music and phonetics, a Purana, an Upanishad, an Agama and so on which are said to be authored by this great saint. The great epic *Mahabharata* ('Shantiparva'), *natya shastra* and

ancient authorities like Dattila, Matanga and Abhinavagupta refer to him as an exponent of music. Hence it cannot be denied that Narada was a historical person of great reputation. But Narada is best known as a devotee of Lord Vishnu.

The present book is an outstanding contribution to bhakti literature. Even though bhakti has been emphasized in many places in the *Bhagavad-gita* it cannot be treated as a treatise on bhakti alone. Shandilya's and Narada's *Bhakti Sutras* are the earliest texts which deal exclusively with bhakti in sutra form. Narada affirms that bhakti is its own fruit (sutra 30) and is the easiest and surest path to God. It is of the nature of supreme love and also eternal (sutras 2, 3). He goes on to explain different aspects of true devotion in this small book of 84 sutras.

The text *Narada Bhakti Sutras* has already been translated and commented upon by many in English, Tamil and other languages. Swami Tyagishanandaji's translation published by the Chennai Ramakrishna Math easily ranks as the best among them. It is surprising to note that so far no Sanskrit commentary for this text had been published. The present publication aptly and admirably fills that gap.

Originally written in Kannada by Swami Harshanandaji, a profound scholar, this publication has been ably translated into Sanskrit by Prof M E Rangachar. The style is so simple and lucid as to enable even a person with only basic knowledge of Sanskrit to understand the nuances of this treatise. Swami Harshanandaji quotes profusely from the *Bhagavata Purana*, the Upanishads, *smritis* and other scriptures. Apt quotations from Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa in the commentary for sutras enhances the value of this book. Neatly printed and well brought out by the Bangalore Ramakrishna Math, this book will certainly be a welcome addition to the existing texts on bhakti literature.

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In Sister Gargi's obituary (March 2004, 232) we mentioned that she was a member of the convent of the Vedanta Society of Northern California. She was only a member of the Society, not its convent. In 'A Visit to Europe' (March 2004, 209) there is a reference to Swami Vivekananda's visit to France in 1897. The year(s) should be 1896 and 1900. We regret the errors.

—Editor

❧ Reports ❧

Organized. 2 medical camps; by Ramakrishna Math, Puri; on the occasion of Magh Saptami Mela; at Chandrabhaga and Olla; on 27 and 31 January 2004. The camps treated 520 patients.

Visited. Ramakrishna Mission, Bhubaneswar; by Sri Panchanan Kanungo, Minister for Finance and Parliamentary Affairs, Government of Orissa; on 29 January. Sri Kanungo took part in the annual function of the centre's middle English school.

Inaugurated. The newly renovated Tower Bungalow; by Sri Kailashpati Mishra, Governor of Gujarat; at Ramakrishna Mission, Limbdi. Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, presided over the function.

Organized. A medical camp and an exhibition on Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda; by Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Allahabad; on the occasion of Magh Mela; at Triveni Sangam; from 6 January to 6 February. 10,500 patients were treated at the medical camp and 80,000 people visited the exhibition.

Inaugurated. Monks' quarters; by Swami Smarananandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission; at Ramakrishna Mission, Vijayawada; on 6 February.

Laid. Foundation stone for monks' quarters; by Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj; at Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Memorial, Porbandar; on 11 February.

Laid. Foundation stone for a new building

for Vivekananda Institute of Value Education and Culture; by Smt Bhavanaben Chikhaliya, Union Minister of State for Tourism and Culture; at Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Memorial, Porbandar; on 11 February.

Inaugurated. *Ramakrishna Darshan*, a permanent exhibition on the life and teachings of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother Memorial Mancha and an academic-cum-cultural complex for the senior secondary section; by Srimat Swami Gahanandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission; at Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar; between 13 and 17 February.

Inaugurated. Centenary celebrations of Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Chennai; by Sri R Venkataraman, former President of India; on 15 February.

Attended. Sri Ramakrishna's birthday celebration; by Sri Arjun Munda, Chief Minister of Jharkhand, and Sri Inder Singh Namdhari, Speaker, Jharkhand Legislative Assembly; at Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Morabadi, Ranchi; on 22 February.

Won. First place; jointly by two Class VIII students of the school run by Ramakrishna Mission, Viveknagar; at the Mathematics Fair 2004 organized by Tripura Mathematical Society. One of the students also stood first at the state-level Eastern India Science Fair organized jointly by NCERT and SCERT. At the second fair, a teacher of our Viveknagar school won the Best Chemistry Teacher award and the school itself was given the Best Science-teaching School award. *